Reading Contradiction
Negotiating Inconsistency in the Politics of Cherríe Moraga

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Abstract

Much has been written about Cherríe Moraga's vision of a 'Queer Aztlán,' a postcolonial space where the differences of race, gender and sexuality are recognised, and the hierarchies of oppression amongst subjugated peoples are set aside in order to forge a utopian project of unity. What has yet to be extensively analysed is the utility of contradiction within such a utopian project.

This project argues that despite the unifying agenda of Moraga's politics, Moraga's oeuvre reinforces a problematic framework of Aristotelian non-contradiction that inscribes, rather than interrogates, difference. This delimiting framework is evident in Moraga's writing through an exploration of the issues of language, internalised oppression, cross-racial feminist alliance and female indigeneity. In line with my position that Moraga's politics are a work in progress, a politics of identity requiring constant self-questioning alongside an ever-changing Chicana/o community, an analysis of the political drawbacks of non-contradiction offers fresh avenues for reconfiguring Moraga's ideas into a more efficacious practice.

Addressing these issues requires the use of an interdisciplinary methodology that incorporates considerations of feminism(s); nationalism; critical race theory; colonialism and postcolonialism; as well as literary theory. This interdisciplinary methodology is necessary due to the multi-genred nature of Moraga's work, involving essay, poetry, drama and fiction, and the far-reaching potential of her politics that requires an analysis of the simultaneity of various forms of oppression.

Table of Contents

A note on citations

References to the majority of Moraga's texts will appear in parentheses, denoted by the following abbreviations:

Bridge (This Bridge Called My Back)
HS (Heroes and Saints)
HW (The Hungry Woman)
LG (The Last Generation)
LWY (Loving in the War Years)
WW (Waiting in the Wings)
XC (A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness).

Full publication details can be found in the bibliography.

Introduction

The race to rescue cultural memory

Nation. Nationality. I am to be the mother of a Mexican baby. I am the worst and best of those macho Chicano nationalists. I picked a man for his brains and dark beauty. And the race continues.
Cherríe Moraga[1]

Citizenship should affirm, not deny, identity.
Pat Mora[2]

My contention is that through an exploration of the incongruities of Cherríe Moraga's identity politics, we can assess whether these contradictions might be helpful to advancing the political endeavours of Chicana/os and consequently, other groups involved in furthering social justice. Whilst I point out the shortcomings of Moraga's identity politics, I do so not with the purpose of attacking her politics but in the belief that contradiction can be helpful. The potential contradiction within this project's title, to 'negotiate inconsistency', draws upon my project's aim to argue that there is political utility to be found within examples of contradiction; that political inconsistency is not only a result of ideological limitation but is also an opportunity to search for more appropriate models of egalitarianism. Most notably, Cherríe Moraga's work displays ideological inconsistency in her attempts to articulate an adaptable, multifarious politics of identity alongside her underlying promotion of essentialised characteristics. Rather than adhere to a limited Aristotelian model of contradiction, which dismisses the simultaneous existence of incompatible elements as a falsity, this project will address binary value systems in order to investigate how

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[1] Cherríe Moraga, *Waiting in the Wings: portrait of a queer motherhood* (New York: Firebrand Books, 1997), 39.
[2] Pat Mora, *Nepantla: Essays from the Land in the Middle* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 17.

the framing of inconsistency can in fact offer us alternative sites of political negotiation, where the quest for egalitarianism demands an attempt to understand and, where possible, reconcile seemingly incongruous elements.

It is also my intention that the focus upon the political strands running across the body of Moraga's work, suggests new ways in which to approach an oeuvre comprised of various genres. This purpose is indebted to the work of Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, whose insightful, book length study of Moraga's work highlights that, 'While critical attention to the issues addressed by [Moraga's] writing tends to over-shadow its formal elements at times, for this reader it is precisely *how* she writes that gives power to *what* she writes.'[3] Scholarship on Moraga has mostly focused on the theme of intersectional identity. Whilst this has been fruitful, this approach can be enriched through a consideration of the interaction between theme and genre; a consideration of the relationship between Moraga's choice of genre and her political message. This analysis of how Moraga communicates her politics, either explicitly or implicitly, emanates from the project title's application of 'negotiation'. This word denotes a process, a relational space of action between two or more conflicting parties that although not always successful, recognises the greater utility of dialogue over debate; of conversation over competition.

The increasingly 'postfeminist' approach to gender inequality that is focused on white, middle-class women has led me and no doubt many others to wonder what has

[3] Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, *The Wounded Heart: Writing on Cherríe Moraga* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 128-129.

happened to the attempts to heal the rift between white and non-white feminists?[4] It is certainly not the case that the combined efforts of various forms of feminism have improved the lives of women of colour to the extent that there is no longer a need to distinguish the inequalities faced by this demographic. A brief look at HIV statistics in the United States alone, for example, illustrates the cross-cutting, endemic gender inequality that is specifically faced by women of colour.[5] While feminists of all backgrounds are of course still active today in various guises, I am interested in what can be learned from the women whose attempts to heal this rift did not come to fruition, in order to utilise these lessons to forge more inclusive and cohesive social justice projects that benefit both white and non-white women. In short, I am interested to find out what caused the failure of attempted dialogue.

My focus on women of colour activism from the 1980s as a source of learning for contemporary feminists, and particularly upon the work of Cherríe Moraga, derives from a twofold interest: Moraga's career and oeuvre was, and remains, filled with the generative potential to form links between feminists and activists from different backgrounds. As recently as this year, Moraga was the recipient of the Lambda Literary Foundation's Pioneer Award that recognises 'individuals who have

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[4] While Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin Brabon argue in favour of what they see as the ability of postfeminism to break down repressive social organising structures and address the position of feminism within the mainstream, they also acknowledge that this focus upon mainstream media and consumer culture has led to postfeminism being criticised for 'its exclusions in terms of class, age, race and (to some extent) sexuality, whereby the ideal postfeminist subject is seen to be a white, middle-class, heterosexual girl.' Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon, *Postfeminism: Cultural Texts and Theories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 6-8.

[5] Center for Disease Control 2011 data shows that although African American and Latina women ages 13-24 account for 32% of the female youth population, they account for approximately 83% of new HIV infections in the United States. Behind these statistics lies a combination of gender and ethnic disparity, where language and economic barriers reduce access to health insurance for immigrants, and gendered power dynamics prevent young women from negotiating safe sex practices. See Zayda Rivera, 'HIV/AIDS and Latinas: What does gender have to do with it?', *The Body: The Complete HIV/AIDS Resource* (September 20, 2011) and Kellee Terrell, 'The Rising HIV Rates Among Young Women and Girls of Color: What's Going On?', *The Body: The Complete HIV/AIDS Resource* (January 25, 2011).

broken new ground in the field of LGBT literature and publishing' by contributing 'to the LGBT literary community in significant and tangible ways: through works of literature, or by establishing publishing houses, publications, archives, bookstores, or other institutions.'[6] This award, accepted by Moraga, demonstrates a concern with building communal links, as does her publishing and literary work that has specifically attempted to improve relations between women of colour. As such, Moraga exemplifies the actors partaking of the attempted dialogue I wish to explore. The literary award also relates to a second and related reason for my focus on Moraga, which is the method of her activism.

Moraga's political work is carried out through her artistic roles and oeuvre. As writer, teacher and publisher, Moraga enacts what we might consider a 'quiet' form of activism, away from the picket lines but no less important. Just as women of colour feminism of the 1980s showed us that there are numerous ways to interpret the role of 'woman', so are there also numerous ways to engender activism. By using the work of Moraga as an example of the 1980s activism that I will mine for suggestions to the contemporary divisions between women, it is also possible to encourage new readings of artistic production that might otherwise be overlooked. Within these revised readings is the action of dialogue that my project will analyse – dialogue between women, ideologies and genres. Due to its continual expansion, revision and variety, Moraga's oeuvre allows us to gauge the various ways in which she has attempted to create dialogue between groups, as well as her political reflections upon these efforts. By reading Moraga's work through an analysis of the philosophical model of contradiction, I will attempt to gauge whether the breakdown of various attempted dialogues, indeed of Moraga's otherwise fruitful production of art-as-activism, is a

[6] Lambda Literary Foundation website: http://www.lambdaliterary.org/awards/pioneer-awards/

result of entrenched binary oppositions that deny the relational and overlapping properties which in fact connect rather than separate us.

The question of the political utility of contradiction in Moraga's work will be addressed in a number of ways. Before discussing terms such as contradiction, inconsistency, identity politics and nationalism at more length in the next chapter, I will clarify my choice to focus on the work of Moraga as an example of writing as activism, through an outline of her project to inscribe Chicana subjectivity. My discussion of Moraga as an activist writer will preface the textual approaches I wish to highlight as offering new understandings of Moraga's political contradictions. These suggestions include an appraisal of Moraga's autobiographical and semi-autobiographical writing as evidencing a problematic interpretation of identity politics. Rather than overturning essentialised notions of difference, I will argue that Moraga's construal of identity politics instead works to inscribe these differences. Finally, I will outline how each chapter will address an investigation of the utility of Moraga's contradictions.

Moraga's dual role as artist-activist, as creator of art that is a form of political activism as well as aesthetic endeavour, is clear in her authorial project to edify a social-artistic appreciation of Chicana identity. While the exact terminology has varied throughout her writing career, the most recent incarnation being 'XicanaDyke', Cherríe Moraga's self-inscribed subjectivity as a Chicana lesbian feminist is comprised of numerous subjects: homosexual, racial, ethnic and gendered. Moraga's multilayered subjectivity is established through numerous literary forms such as essay, drama, poetry and autobiography, all of which are articulated through a

Chicana/o nationalist framework that does not distinguish between art and activism: 'Earth. Dirt. Ground. Land. / And what are these essays, these stories and poems, other than just shovel, hoe and pickax "digging up the dirt" in an attempt to uncover a buried Xicana/o history, both personal *and* political' (*LWY*, iv).

The famous feminist tenet of the personal as political is paraphrased by Moraga to demonstrate the female-centred political motivation behind her historical excavations: unearthing buried histories is a necessary step in establishing the cultural presence and sovereignty of Chicano ancestors before the onset of European colonialism, mirroring the Chicano nationalist emphasis upon indigenous ancestry. The allusion to 'airing one's laundry in public' through Moraga's reference to digging up the dirt that uncovers not only what is lost but also what is undesirable, signals that Moraga's political activism involves reconfiguring Chicano nationalism itself as much as using aspects of Chicano nationalism to overturn what she regards as the cultural imperialism of the Anglo-dominated United States.

Moraga's emphasis on recovering and recuperating histories is indicative of her artistic-political declaration that, 'Finding the path to memory is my task as an artist' (*LWY*, 168). For Moraga, memory is a political tool to be employed in the 'battle against extinction,' against 'the cultural assimilation of generations of familia' that has raged since Europeans first colonised the Americas, and it is 'through art [that] cultural memory is transmitted….'[7] This project addresses the personal and communal cultural memory that Moraga wishes to convey and construct through a nationalist framework of identity politics in order to establish and validate her Chicana subjectivity, and the ways in which such politics suffer from an inability to incorporate contradiction. To garner a positive outcome from Moraga's political

[7] Moraga, *A Xicana Codex*, 92, 91; and Moraga, *Loving in the War Years,* 167.

inconsistencies, we must understand how contradiction is constructed, and the value that is consequently associated with this philosophical configuration.

Reading contradiction between the personal and political

It is difficult to discuss the meaning of contradiction without concurrently discussing Aristotle's Principle or Law of Non-Contradiction, just as it is difficult to discuss the notion of nation without considering the process of nationalism through which it is constructed. In other words, the Law of Non-Contradiction, which I will refer to as LNC, defines as well as emanates from, contradiction. (Already we are faced with the seeming impenetrability of contradiction, where the thing itself is defined through a law that states its non-existence!)

Various definitions and interpretations of contradiction have been proposed, most of which seem to entail an aspect of irreconcilable opposition: 'propositions one of which must be true and the other false' (Augustus DeMorgan); 'the relation between statements that are exact opposites' (A. N. Prior); and 'two formulae [where] one is the negation of the other' (Graeme Forbes).[8] Contradictory statements are also described as 'inconsistent with each other if they cannot both be true, and more specifically if the truth of one would entail the falsity (non-truth) of the other.'[9] Patrick Grim helpfully outlines all of these propositions in a trajectory that demonstrates the ways in which contradiction has come to be increasingly associated with systems of value. Opposition gains meaning through its conflation with notions

[8] DeMorgan, Prior and Forbes are all cited in Patrick Grim, 'What is a Contradiction' in Graham Priest, JC Beall, and Bradley Armour-Garb (Editors), *The Law of Non-Contradiction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 51.
[9] Sybil Wolfram in ibid., 51.

of truth and falsity, which are in turn associated with notions of affirmation and denial and finally, 'negation'. It is this association with a value system that makes the manifestation of contradiction germane to this project: I wish to demonstrate that although Moraga's political explications appear inconsistent, this contradictory feature of her work is not always appropriately interpreted through the logical and philosophical negation that limits the functionality of contradiction and in turn inhibits attempts to create discourse between inconsistent ideologies. This is not to say that I believe all of Moraga's political ideas are valid, but that a progression towards more comprehensive ideas of social justice is more likely if we address, rather than dismiss, the inconsistencies of her work. This progression is inhibited by the divisive Aristotelian notion of impossible simultaneity that regulates discourse itself, an impossibility that overlooks the necessity and promise of 'relation' found in Prior's version of contradiction. The societal necessity of this relational dynamic is foregrounded by Moraga herself, through her and others' argument for the recognition of the connection between personal and political spheres.

Moraga's proposals around Chicana/o identity politics are intended to highlight a connection between the personal and political lives of not only past and present Chicanas whose histories and activism are often overlooked, but also of her own. We cannot always graft Moraga's biographical details onto an analysis of her political ideas, as her work is comprised of multiple genres besides autobiographical and semi-autobiographical essays and her memoir. Moraga's drama, poetry and fiction incorporate biographical details but do not lend themselves to being analysed as strictly autobiographical works. Even Moraga's autobiographical writing is at times framed in such a way as to make us question its veracity as autobiography. We can, however, use these biographical details and (semi-)autobiographical writing to trace

the contradictions that arise between Moraga's depiction of life events and her political output – Moraga's spectrum from personal to political. Tracking these inconsistencies adds another layer to this project's aim to gauge whether contradiction can be helpful, and how the 'impasse' between social construction and essentialism is manifested not only in her political writing but also – and necessarily so given her alignment to identity politics – in Moraga's life writing. Outlining biographical details alongside Moraga's body of work demonstrates a subjective oeuvre that is an act of contradiction itself, blurring the boundaries of autobiography and fiction; of truth and falsity.

Cherríe Moraga was born in 1952 to working-class Mexican and Anglo parents in Los Angeles.[10] Moraga has degrees in English and Feminist Literature, and has taught at various institutions during her career as a writer and dramatist, culminating in the Artist in Residence position she has held for over ten years at Stanford University's Drama Department. As Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano has pointed out, Moraga's teaching is not confined to privileged institutions such as Stanford, but has also involved community-based projects such as DramaDIVAS, a drama workshop for lesbian/gay/bisexual young people of colour based in San Francisco, and 'Indígena as Scribe', a 1990s community-based writing workshop comprised of women of various indigenous backgrounds.[11]

Moraga first came to prominence with the publication of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, which she co-edited with Gloria

[10] Yarbro-Bejarano, 4.
[11] Ibid., 28; and Moraga, *A Xicana Codex*, 82.

Anzaldúa.[12] Originally published in 1981, this collection of essays and speeches gathers a variety of writers to analyse the contemporary state of feminism in the United States, and its (lack of) treatment of women of colour. This was a watershed publication, exposing the paradoxical inequality of feminism in the United States that focused on the needs of Anglo, middle class women.

Importantly, the contributors to *Bridge* employed the burgeoning notion of 'U.S. third world feminism'. These writers, based in the United States although some had been born in other countries, drew parallels between themselves and third world women, owing to the fact that these seemingly diverse groups had both experienced their specific circumstances being overlooked by larger, dominant groups, be it national and international feminism or Third World solidarity movements (*Bridge*, no page number). 'How has the special circumstances of her pain been overlooked…?,' Moraga asks about the woman of colour (*Bridge*, no page number). In drawing this correspondence between Western women of colour and third world women, *Bridge* attempts to increase and strengthen the foundations from which these women can begin to address their specific inequalities, so that it is 'from a position of power rather than compromise' that women of colour are able to make any changes.

Bridge also took a step away from previous feminist writing and attempted to forge relationships between women, rather than focusing on the relationship between sexes, in order to progress from previous feminist arguments that framed themselves solely as responses to sexism. Analysing the position of women in relation to other women, not in relation to men, gave an alternative starting point from which to renegotiate the gendered dynamics of power. Whether *Bridge* manages to move away

[12] Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga (Eds.), *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983).

from writing as a response to oppressive powers, in this case Anglo-American feminism, is arguable.

The 'bridge' is most strongly supported, I would argue, by the Combahee River Collective's 'A Black Feminist Statement,' which makes the case that, 'We might use our position at the bottom […] to make a clear leap into revolutionary action. If Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression' (*Bridge*, 215). Addressing the 'special circumstances of her pain', of black women in the United States, entails a recognition of the simultaneous existence of multiple oppressions. Without detracting from the gains of civil rights movements, going a step further than the civil rights' focus on race means that systems of oppression, present in the sexism of even the most progressive civil rights groups, can fully be addressed. *Here* is the revolutionary action, questioning groups whose motives purport to benefit an entire community yet who do so by/whilst subjugating their female constituents.

Moraga followed her editorial project with Anzaldúa, with 1983's *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas*, edited with Alma Gómez and Mariana Romo-Carmona, and including two of Moraga's short stories, 'Sin luz' and 'Pesadilla'.[13] In the same year, Moraga published *Loving in the War Years: lo que nunca pasó por sus labios*.[14] From being one amongst an array of voices in *Bridge*, *Loving* became the platform that brought Moraga to prominence as a writer of individual merit. *Loving* engages a number of genres: poetry, prose, essay and autobiography. It is in this collection of writing that we come to learn of Moraga's upbringing, her early life speaking little

[13] Alma Gómez, Cherríe Moraga and Mariana Romo-Carmona (Eds.), *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas* (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983).
[14] Cherríe L. Moraga, *Loving in the War Years: lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press, Expanded Second Edition, 2000).

Spanish, the conflicts within her own family and her social and political interests. Moraga's lesbianism is threaded throughout the various pieces, so that race, gender and sexuality are often inseparable. In the second, expanded edition of *Loving*, published in 2000, Moraga includes a new introduction and *A Flor de Labios*, consisting of writing from 1995-1999.

In *The Last Generation* (1993), Moraga continues her political writing, this time with less autobiographical prose and more essays, including 'Art in América con Acento' and 'The Breakdown of the Bicultural Mind', both of which point to Moraga's preoccupation with the status of Mexican Americans in the United States.[15] 'Art in América con Acento' outlines Moraga's idea of what it means to be a Chicano, and the political foundations of Chicano art. This essay also demonstrates a more marked leaning by Moraga toward ideas of indigeneity and self-identification as indigenous, which is often articulated through the language of nationalism.

Most notable about *The Last Generation* is Moraga's combined exploration of assimilation, cultural memory, and race. Moraga's increasing examination of the indigenous heritage of Mexican Americans is very much in the spirit of Chicano nationalism, which, as evidenced in 'El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán', invokes a pre-colonial indigenous heritage through the Aztec mythical homeland of Aztlán. Aztlán, argues J. Jorge Klor de Alva, is 'the legendary point of origin of the Aztecs,' believed to be 'located somewhere to the north of their capital, Mexico-Tenochtitlan.'[16] Aztlán invokes a creation narrative, a point of origin for Chicanos that situates them as descendents of peoples native to what is now the Southwest of the United States, '*los*

[15] Cherríe Moraga, *The Last Generation* (South End Press: Boston, 1993).
[16] J. Jorge Klor de Alva, 'Aztlán, Borinquen and Hispanic Nationalism in the United States' in Rudolfo A. Anaya and Francisco Lomelí (Eds.), *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 148.

mexicanos, from which came their name of *Aztecas*.'[17] Aztlán is more than a geographical site, as Klor de Alva argues that, 'the appropriation from the elitelore of ancient Mexico of such a seminal emblematic device as Aztlán was the most brilliant political maneuver of the Chicano cultural nationalists.'[18] Aztlán afforded Chicano nationalists a route to sovereignty within the United States by positing that the geographic and cultural roots of Chicanos preceded the formation of the United States, laying claim to Aztlán as an occupied nation within a nation, 'an invisible nation within the engulfing "imagined community" of dominant U.S. discourse.'[19] Having such a rich cultural resource as Aztlán also provided Chicano nationalists with an aid to combating assimilation, a goal that preoccupies Moraga's *Last Generation*, often in a racialised manner.

Moraga's goal of resisting assimilation is clear: 'I am that raging breed of mixed-blood person who writes to defend a culture that I know is being killed.… I have tasted assimilation and it is bitter on my tongue' (*LG*, 129, 127). Moraga's Anglo and Mexican heritage is the locus of the assimilation she resists, which is expressed racially, as her increasingly light-skinned and blonde family come to represent cultural loss, so that race and culture are conflated (*LG*, 148). For Moraga, protecting cultural memory, then, involves defending race, as her memoir testifies. As Jacqueline Martinez points out, however, claims to cultural memory are fraught with phenomenological difficulty: '…there is a certain degree to which all of us, Chicana, Native American, and African diaspora, must consider the question of an

[17] Michael Pina, 'The Archaic, Historical and Mythicized Dimensions of Aztlán' in Rudolfo A. Anaya and Francisco Lomelí (Eds.), *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 14.
[18] Klor de Alva, 149.
[19] Laura Elisa Pérez, '*El desorden*, Nationalism, and Chicana/o Aesthetics' in Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcón and Minoo Moallem (Eds.), *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 19.

irrecoverable history and cultural heritage. What does it mean to recover a cultural heritage when important aspects of the cultural heritage could be irrecoverable?'[20] As we will see in Chapter Five that discusses Moraga's play, *The Hungry Woman*, for Moraga, recovering cultural heritage may problematically involve racialising indigenous peoples in an attempt to prevent them from 'disappearing.'

'Queer Aztlán' deepens our understanding of cultural assimilation by focusing on the mechanisms within nationalist movements that suppress multifaceted cultural subjectivity. 'Queer Aztlán' is Moraga's critique of nationalist movements that exclude citizens through processes such as sexism and homophobia, in the attempt to form a communal identity. This essay forms the bedrock of Moraga's politics that adhere to yet wish to expand, the limitations of Chicano nationalism so that it is able to accommodate a lesbian Chicana subjectivity.

Between *Loving in the War Years* and *The Last Generation*, Moraga began to write plays. This move into the dramatic is an intriguing one, which Moraga explains as coming about through her journal writing. It was when she realised that the 'I' of her journal had turned into the third person that Moraga realised she needed to write plays.[21] This third person became Corky of *Giving Up The Ghost*, Moraga's first play. *Giving Up the Ghost* premiered in February of 1989 and is published as a collection with the plays *Shadow of a Man* and *Heroes and Saints*.[22] *Giving Up the Ghost* is described as a stage play in three portraits: Corky, Marisa and Amalia. These three female characters/portraits cover three different generations. Corky is in fact the

[20] Jacqueline M. Martinez, *Phenomenology of Chicana Experience and Identity: Communication and Transformation in Praxis* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 105.
[21] Interview with the author, August 2009.
[22] Cherríe Moraga, *Heroes and Saints and Other Plays* (Albuquerque: West End Press, 2000).

teenage Marisa, now a Chicana in her late 20s, and Amalia was born in Mexico, a generation older than Marisa. The play addresses 'the question of prisons / politics / sex,'[23] of the social and ideological rules that govern (or imprison) us.

1990 saw the first production of *Shadow of a Man*, which begins in 1969 in the Los Angeles home of the Rodríguez family, and takes place over a period of approximately a year. *Shadow of a Man* traces the consequences of family secrets that, once revealed, make us question gender roles. It is no accident that Moraga's stage directions state that the play opens into the interior of the house to places that are mostly inhabited by mothers and daughters.

Heroes and Saints, first produced in 1992, follows a community of Mexican American agricultural labourers attempting to gain recognition of, and recompense for, the birth defects and illness that are being caused by pesticides, most notably embodied (!) in Cerezita, who is born with only a head.

Watsonville: Some Place Not Here and *Circle in the Dirt: El Pueblo de East Palo Alto*, continue what we might call Moraga's activist drama. Both plays, as with *Heroes and Saints*, draw from the real life experiences of Californian communities. *Watsonville* is loosely based on three events, as described in the author's notes for the published play: the cannery strikes from 1985 to 1987, the 1989 earthquake, and the appearance of La Virgen de Guadalupe on the face of an oak tree in Pinto Lake County Park in 1992.[24] Dolores and Amparo, from *Heroes and Saints*, reappear as older characters in *Watsonville*.

[23] Ibid., 6.
[24] Cherríe L. Moraga, *Watsonville/Circle in the Dirt* (Albuquerque: West End Press, 2005), 4.

Finally, *Heart of the Earth: A Popul Vuh Story* and *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea*, premiered as complete plays in 1994 and 2000 respectively.[25] The 1994 production of *Heart of the Earth* was part of the Jim Henson Foundation's International Festival of Puppet Theatre. *Heart of the Earth's* world premiere took place outside California, unlike Moraga's other plays, in New York in 1995. *Heart of the Earth* is an adaptation of the Quiché Maya creation myth, while *The Hungry Woman* is set in the early part of the second decade of the twenty-first century, imagining an ethnic civil war that has divided half of the United States into smaller nations of people, including 'the Mechicano Nation of Aztlán which includes parts of the Southwest and the border states of what was once Northern México' (*HW*, 6).

2011 saw the publication of Moraga's most recent text, *A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness: Writings, 2000-2010*.[26] *Xicana Codex* brings together various writings, including poetry, opinion pieces, essays, papers delivered at conferences and even eulogies. Themes from Moraga's previous work are further developed, such as assimilation and cultural amnesia. This collection of writing is, as Moraga explains, also a reflection upon her roles as 'writer, teacher, teatrista, mother, daughter, and lesbian lover,' roles that are tinged with an increasing consideration of economically-triggered environmental issues: 'plants and animals, villages and people-of-color communities disappearing into an ocean of melting glacier and broken levees; the dollar bill that makes it all possible' (*XC*, xvii). 'The Salt That Cures: Remembering Gloria Anzaldúa' offers an insight into the editing of *This Bridge Called My Back*, which scholars of the work of Anzaldúa will no doubt find insightful. For the

[25] Both plays are collected in Cherríe L. Moraga, *The Hungry Woman* (Albuquerque: West End Press, 2003).
[26] Cherríe L. Moraga, *A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness: Writings, 2000-2010* (Duke University Press: Durham & London, 2011).

purposes of this project, what is most informative about Moraga's *Xicana Codex* is, as the spelling of the title suggests, her increasing articulation of the indigenousness of Chicana/o politics: 'I spell *Xicana* and *Xicano* (Chicana and Chicano) with an *X* (the Nahuatl spelling of the "ch" sound) to indicate a reemerging política, especially among young people, grounded in Indigenous American belief systems and identities' (*XC*, xxi). The generative potential of indigenous belief systems is undermined by an increasingly racialised insularity that is incompatible with the growing need for dialogue between peoples emanating from the widening breadth of issues arising from globalisation. The dangers of this insularity are also textually raised through Moraga's use of autobiography. While recognition of the links between personal and political spheres is helpful, as will be discussed in Chapter One's analysis of identity politics, too great a focus on autobiography is not without its ideological pitfalls. It is thus worthwhile outlining the appearance of autobiography throughout Moraga's oeuvre.

Although even Moraga's dramatic writing contains elements that inform our understanding of her personal history and her political goals, *Waiting in the Wings: portrait of a queer motherhood* is perhaps Moraga's most obviously autobiographical work. *Waiting in the Wings* uses Moraga's retrospective journal entries to depict the premature birth of her son, her relationship with her lover at the time, and the struggle to maintain both motherhood and career. This is, as the title says, a portrait as well as solely journal entries, incorporating retrospective prose written after the event. Perhaps not dissimilarly from the portraits of Corky and Marisa, there are two 'ages' of Cherríe Moraga in *Waiting in the Wings*: the woman experiencing the events and the older woman reflecting on these events. As with her other texts, *Waiting in the Wings* works in many ways in tandem with Moraga's other texts, especially the

revised edition of *Loving in the War Years*. It is in the later edition that we find out about this relationship ending, and how issues of race and ethnicity may have played a part. In problematising conceptions of autobiography with retrospective portraits that add an air of potential fictionalisation, *Waiting in the Wings* contributes to a debate on the autobiographical form as a source of exploration as well as 'evidence', highlighting the connection between Moraga's life writing and her quest to develop and enact a Chicano politics of identity.

As Robert Sayre notes, autobiography is far more than a verbatim account of a personal history, due to the impossibility of distinguishing between personal and cultural documents.[27] Whilst autobiographies may offer historical fact, 'they are not factual history about a particular time, person, or event. Rather they offer subjective "truth" rather than "fact."'[28] This is certainly the case for Chicano autobiography, which offers personal detail but also subjective interpretations of contemporary society. This makes Chicana/o autobiography particularly suited to aiding an analysis of the effects of Chicano cultural nationalism upon the daily lives of its constituents, a genre that Chicano scholars have argued is 'imbricated […] with questions about Chicano literary production as a major articulation of resistance to American social and cultural hegemony […] in which individual experience and collective historical identity are inextricably bound.'[29] The connection of individual and collective Chicano identity is not only a preordained element of Chicano autobiography but is also developed through this genre, especially through the conflation of familial and political structures.

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[27] Robert F. Sayre in Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), ix.
[28] Smith and Watson, 10.
[29] Genaro M. Padilla, 'Recovering Mexican-American Autobiography', in Ramón Gutiérrez and Genaro Padilla (Eds.), *Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage* (Texas, Houston: Arte Público Press, 1993), 154.

Moraga's autobiographical work is in many ways a family biography, as Moraga's autobiographical self is often negotiating her relationship to family members. Moraga's Mexican mother and Anglo father, as well as her brother and sister, feature in her writing, as does her son, her partners, and extended family members. The autobiographical details of Moraga's relationships within her family act as a microcosm of *la familia* as articulated through Chicano nationalism:

> I am the daughter of a Chicana and an anglo. I think most days I am an embarrassment to both groups. I sometimes hate the white in me so viciously that I long to forget the obligation my skin has imposed upon my life. To speak two tongues, one of privilege, one of oppression. I must. But I will not double-talk and I refuse to let *anybody's* movement determine for me what is safe and fair to say. (*LWY*, xiii)

Moraga's mundane autobiographical details of her mixed parentage are quickly transformed into an examination of her status within the individual communities of her parents. It soon becomes apparent that Moraga's mixed heritage raises questions of class, and even of colonialism, as it can be inferred that Moraga's 'two tongues' represent the dynamic of oppressor and oppressed, especially if we consider this metaphorical bilingualism in light of Malintzin Tenepal, the indigenous woman who acted as a translator for Hernán Cortés as well as being his mistress, and who is symbolically regarded as the mother of the mestizo race, more about whom will be explored throughout this project. Furthermore, the cultural dilemma emanating from the details of Moraga's parentage is considered with regard to political activism. Although Moraga asserts that no movement will dictate how she articulates her mixed heritage, in this assertion, she nonetheless incorporates them into her autobiographical expositions, highlighting the intricate ties between political and private 'families'. As Sandra Soto notes in her deeply insightful queer reading of Moraga's work, '[Moraga's] biography is never meant to be so "auto" that it is not collective, and her narrative transformations are never so individual that they are not components of a

manifesto.'[30] Moraga's autobiographical writing is not just an inscription of subjectivity but is also 'the political stands that the writer takes and encourages others to take.'[31] My project attempts to unpick this didacticism, which is often overlooked in the tendency to regard Moraga's writing as 'evidence' rather than a political stance.

Soto argues that an uncritical approach to Moraga's autobiographical material as evidence, or as self-evident truth, merely perpetuates, rather than deconstructs, difference:

> The danger of the uncritical experience-as-evidence approach to difference is that it renders difference still more naturalized; rather than historicize the workings of ideological systems that have produced and marginalized accounts of difference in the first place, the exponents of such an approach pursue the unveiling of difference as the end goal.[32]

I do not wish to underplay the significance of documenting marginalised experiences, and in Chapter Three, I discuss the importance of feminist consciousness-raising groups. Considering the didacticism of Moraga's autobiography and the influence of Chicano nationalism upon her autobiographical writing, however, Soto's warning is crucial, as it forces us to look beyond Moraga's intersectional inscription of difference as an end result, to examine the politics underpinning this intersectionality. In doing so, it becomes evident that what sustains the content and form of Moraga's activism is also what makes questionable the ability of her politics to incorporate the heterogeneity arising from contradiction: Chicano cultural nationalism. There are also subversive instances, however, where form, as well as content, incites contradiction, offering valuable new ways to read Moraga's work.

It is not only through content that contradictions arise in Moraga's work; as well as Moraga's explicitly inconsistent discussions around race and nation, the form

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[30] Sandra K. Soto, 'Cherríe Moraga's Going Brown: "Reading Like a Queer",' *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (Vol. 11, No. 2, 2005), 242.
[31] Ibid., 241-2.
[32] Ibid., 241.

of her work at times consciously positions contradictory elements together, to advantageous political effect, while at other times, the writer's use of fiction locates falsity as a truth-maker, critiquing prescribed formations of knowledge. The following chapters will combine an investigation of form alongside an analysis of the content of Moraga's work in order to gauge whether they are helpfully inconsistent.

Chapter One explores the methodology underpinning this project through a consideration of Aristotle's Law of Non-Contradiction as the delimiting philosophical foundation of Moraga's unwittingly divisive, binaristic approach to politics. I will discuss the appearance of contradiction in Moraga's work through her goal to dismantle established hierarchies of power through a deconstruction of the philosophical division between 'truth' and 'falsity'. The effects of Aristotle's notion of impossible simultaneity are evidenced through Moraga's identity politics, which aim to demonstrate, through a conjoined appraisal of personal and political arenas, that the simultaneity of multiple identity markers is not, as Aristotle would have it, impossible and thus without value. To illustrate this tension between valued, normative singularity and desired heterogeneity, I will discuss the concept of identity politics itself, followed by an evaluation of Moraga's interpretation of identity politics. Moraga's identity politics aim to reconfigure Chicano nationalism but are problematically fuelled by the very mechanisms of non-contradiction that led Mexican American activists of the civil rights era to critique the sexism of the Chicano movement. Chicano nationalism will be explored as source of both political and artistic motivation for Moraga, as both are intertwined in the tenets of the Chicano movement. The goal of 1960s and 70s Chicano cultural nationalism to further the rights of Mexican Americans through artistic output, is continued through

Moraga's approach to her writing as activism, where the inseparability of the roles of Chicana/o and artist engenders an oeuvre that is always politically motivated. By outlining the restrictive elements of nationalism, however, the incompatibility between Moraga's Chicano identity politics and her goal to engender diversity will become clear. Finally, this chapter will address a second but no less important manifestation of contradiction in Moraga's work, which is an inconsistency of form. This section will outline my attempt to demonstrate the utility of contradiction in Moraga's work through an analysis of the writer's manipulation of language and genre that inadvertently uncovers an internalisation of oppressive mechanisms through a blurring of the boundary between fact and fiction.

Throughout the rest of the project, my chapters will track a 'strata' of contradiction, moving increasingly inward, from the national, public sphere of language politics between oppressor and oppressed, to the field of coalition politics that demonstrates localised group discord, to internalised oppression that finally demonstrates the individual entrenchment of non-contradiction. This trajectory moves from the overtly political to the personal, highlighting the interconnections between the two in an experiment with the premise of identity politics to translate 'the personal as political' into everyday life, as will be discussed in Chapter One. This analysis of Moraga's connections between the personal and political is designed to assess the capacity of her identity politics to incorporate contradiction, which I take to be an indicator of an appropriate consideration of how to enact diversity.

Chapter Two will elaborate on the public debate in the United States around identity politics, focusing on Moraga's response to attempts to abolish bilingualism in California schools. Language is presented by Moraga as an ethnic marker and thus Spanish-English bilingualism is regarded as a means of protecting Mexican American

heritage from institutional oppression. The tacit capacity to learn identity through markers such as language, lends itself to an anti-essentialist stance, where attempts to erode language are overcome by the ability to maintain cultural heritage through education. The debate over bilingual education raises the distinction between the upkeep of cultural traditions, and the notion that certain cultural elements are inherent. In an attempt to foster political significance, Moraga's writing attributes an innateness to the Spanish spoken by Mexican Americans, an unintended consequence of which is the entrenchment of singularity. Although maintaining claims to indigenous as well as Anglo-European and Iberian heritage, Moraga, in the tradition of Chicano nationalism, focuses on Spanish as opposed to indigenous languages, acknowledging the legacy of intercultural relations between indigenous and Spanish peoples. The focus on one language as opposed to many, given the varied cultural heritage to which Moraga ascribes, demonstrates the political bias towards singularity, which is conflated with credibility. This chapter will outline the context from which Moraga's 'either/or' framing of a neo-colonial battle between English and Spanish arises, and the exclusionary consequences developing from an inability to incorporate contradiction, which include a suppression of Moraga's own diverse heritage, and a perpetuation against indigenous peoples of the very 'neo-colonialism' Moraga intends to overturn.

Chapter Three moves from the public politics of language, contextualised through the binaristic, 'us versus them' confrontation between Spanish and English, to a landscape of local group politics, in order to demonstrate the effects of non-contradiction among an already heterogeneous group aligned to the same cause. My analysis of the workings of a cross-racial feminist publishing alliance, of which Moraga was a member, will draw from *This Bridge Called My Back*, what I take to be

the blueprint for Moraga's approach to 'third world feminism', in order to investigate how Moraga's approach to racial politics demonstrates a struggle to incorporate contradiction – in the form of Chela Sandoval's notion of a 'differential consciousness' and Donna Haraway's cyborg – that is ultimately lost; the coalitional potential of Moraga's cross-racial publishing alliance is curtailed through the continuation of binaristic structures. Comprised of women from various non-white backgrounds, the women of Kitchen Table Press shared the goal to publish radical writing by women of colour. This goal was comprised, I will argue, by Moraga's strategic focus on establishing a racialised Chicana subjectivity, just as the Chicano Movement was compromised by a nationalist ideology dictating a select and thus exclusionary choice of cultural signifiers. Although aligned around the issue of third world feminism, divisions within the publishing alliance are created from Moraga's political vision that focuses predominantly on race, impeding an intersectional approach to the simultaneity of oppression and the diversity of identity. While these divisions emanate from a rejection of contradiction, there remain textual traces between members of Kitchen Table Press that not only demonstrate the dialogic potential of consciousness-raising but in their form, also offer clues to the depth of the manifestation of non-contradiction.

The didacticism of Moraga's ideas on nationalism, consciously narrated in her essays and semi-autobiographical work, is interrogated by a noticeable formal shift into fiction, where the exclusionary elements of racial politics are conveyed in a manner that draws us into the unconscious, an internalised repository of essentialised and oppressive notions of identity. It is pertinent, Chapter Four argues, that one of Moraga's most politically self-questioning pieces utilises the short story mode, raising the question of whether the utility of form outweighs the politics of Moraga's

nationalism and whether fiction, as Ernest Hemingway argued, 'may throw some light on what has been written as fact.'[33] Moraga's story, 'Pesadilla', extends the discussion of cross-racial feminist alliances, focusing on an interracial lesbian relationship. The issues impeding the cross-racial group politics of Kitchen Table Press are put under the microscope in this story of an individual's increasing unease at being in an interracial relationship, illuminating the thorny subject of internalised oppression. Influenced by a black-white racial paradigm, the story's protagonist, Cecilia, is caught in a cycle of oppositions between 'whiteness' and 'blackness'. Feeling it to be the safer choice, Cecilia opts for 'whiteness'. The tragedy of the story lies in this act of choosing, where binary oppositions force us to see and perpetuate difference instead of engaging with commonality or common difference. Cecilia's fear threaded throughout the story conveys the risk attached to her contradictory allegiance to both white and black friends and lovers. Unable to choose both, Cecilia excludes her black lover who is associated with the undesirable negation of otherness. This chapter demonstrates the devastating effects of the philosophical grip displayed by non-contradiction at an individual level.

While the form of 'Pesadilla' draws us into an individual's subconscious, demonstrating how non-contradiction is internalised, this focus on the particularity of individual experiences of non-contradiction also reinforces the dialogic value of consciousness-raising discussed in Chapter Three: without the dialogue of consciousness-raising that situates our complex experiences in relation to those of the people around us, the effects of oppression remain inexpressible in the empty intersection between binary oppositions. Unable to discuss her experience of race and racism with her lover, Deborah, and to view her beyond ideas of 'blackness' and

[33] Ernest Hemingway, Preface, *A Moveable Feast* (New York: Scribner, 1996).

'whiteness', Cecilia excludes Deborah, resituating herself as both victim and oppressor. By approaching 'Pesadilla' alongside an intertextual reading of the work of Moraga and Barbara Smith (fictional and autobiographical), both members of Kitchen Table Press, the fictional piece offers avenues for a micro-analysis of the macro-politics of the preceding chapter by allowing us to focus on dialogic relations between black women and Latinas.

Finally, Chapter Five draws together issues from the preceding chapters in an analysis of 'la Chicana Indígena', the female figure at the centre of Moraga's 'Queer Aztlán', her most pointedly nationalist writing. Through her depiction of female indigeneity, Moraga enacts a dialogue with a history of mythology that has vilified indigenous women through a narrative of betrayal. This narrative has found its way into Mexican American and Chicano nationalist rhetoric, affecting the political activity of Chicanas. In her play *The Hungry Woman*, Moraga attributes a politicised performativity to la Chicana Indígena, making use of the dramatic, but also the mythical mode in which Northrop Frye has argued, 'characters have the greatest possible power of action.'[34] As with the internalised oppression explored in Chapter Four, however, this chapter examines the underlying machinations of race that complicate Moraga's portrayal of la Chicana Indígena. Assimilationist conceptions of *mestizaje* and racialised conceptions of indigeneity threaten to dehistoricise the very indigenous peoples with whom Moraga claims an alliance. Moraga's presentation of la Chicana Indígena helpfully presents, however, the possibility of being both oppressor and oppressed, as her agenda to legitimate Chicana political agency threatens to undermine the contemporary existence and action of Native Americans. It is evident through Moraga's racialisation of la Chicana Indígena that her identity

[34] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1990), 134.

politics struggle to accept the diversity of indigeneity, labelling indigenous women as the marginalised, brown female 'Other' in order to depict their oppression. Nevertheless, this inconsistency within Moraga's framing of social justice paradoxically brings to light her failure to embrace the broader contradiction of heterogeneity, where indigeneity is not limited to race.

Chapter One

Singularly Greek: Chicana identity politics and Aristotle's 'Law of Non-Contradiction'

...contradictions cannot always be reconciled and if this is not grasped a space is made for reactionary politics.
Nira Yuval-Davis[1]

Rather than simply focus on the more successful elements of Moraga's politics, such as the areas of her writing where she takes a social constructivist approach to argue for adaptable and appropriate individual and familial models, I see it as more beneficial to look at these elements in their relation to inconsistencies in the author's work, where ideological 'falsities' such as essentialism are present alongside more progressive ideas. Acknowledging such inconsistencies enables us to analyse the areas of Moraga's politics that belie the difficulty of enacting an egalitarian project, a difficulty that is often the result of entrenched forms of oppression. Such an analysis will, for example, help us to better understand the inconsistency between Moraga's simultaneous anti-racism and essentialism; between her simultaneous promotion of 'third world feminism' and the difficulty she portrays in forming relationships with other women of colour. Addressing the conjunction of contradictory elements as an intersection, rather than an impasse, draws disparate (and oftentimes oppressive) elements into a discourse, rather than allowing them to go unchecked and undermine the more fruitful elements of Moraga's ideas. This intersectional approach to contradiction requires a refutation of Aristotle's approach to singularity, which in turn questions the value associated with his division of truth and falsity.

[1] Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Women, Ethnicity and Empowerment' in Ann Oakley and Juliet Mitchell (Eds.), *Who's Afraid of Feminism? Seeing Through the Backlash* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 77.

This chapter will outline Aristotle's denial of contradiction, making evident the valuation of singularity over the simultaneity of diverse elements. I will demonstrate that through a refusal of intersectionality, truth and falsity are placed in opposition and consequently, measured respectively as valuable and worthless. The philosophical incapability of negated elements to be repositories of truth is, I will argue, of great importance to the ways in which power is manifested and thus, of great import to Moraga's anti-colonial project of identity politics that seeks to dismantle hierarchies of value used to marginalise undesirable groups of society. It is with Moraga's identity politics that seek to inscribe the existence and value of her Chicana lesbian subjectivity that we find a rebuttal to the notion of impossible contradiction: for Moraga, it is possible, and desirable, to exceed the limits of singularity and engender multiple facets of identity at the same time. In order to argue Moraga's case for an identity politics of simultaneity, we must understand what is meant by identity politics and the debates surrounding this form of political belief, and so I will illustrate this term alongside an explanation of the Chicano nationalism that influences Moraga's ideas. It is with Chicano nationalism, and the wider, exclusionary mechanisms of nationalism, that inconsistencies begin to affect Moraga's attempts to articulate social justice. The very diversity Moraga promotes is circumvented by the singular essentialisms of nationalism, an ideology based upon defining societal groups by highlighting their difference from, and thus superiority over, others. Finally, following a discussion of the divisive tactics of nationalism, and how this project aims to demonstrate their damaging influence upon Moraga's political stance, I will outline my project's approach to an analysis of beneficial inconsistencies, arising from Moraga's utilisation of language and genre. In the textual contradictions emerging from Moraga's interweaving of truth, fiction and languages, a helpful dialogue is

enacted between oppositional elements, creating a space that is amenable to, without devaluing, simultaneous difference.

Aristotle's 'Law of Non-Contradiction'

The neglect of relational properties in Aristotle's Law of Non-Contradiction derives from the philosopher's ontological foregrounding of singularity. Aristotle's LNC states that, 'it is impossible for the same thing to hold and not to hold of the same thing in the same respect at the same time.'[2] LNC is, the philosopher claims, the most secure and basic of principles, being so fundamental as to be universally accepted,[3] an acceptance that still continues today within certain schools of thought.[4] Aristotle's confidence in the fundamental properties of LNC as 'the most indisputable of all beliefs'[5] is undermined, however, by the philosopher's own variations of this principle that are set out in *On Interpretation* and *Metaphysics.* That Aristotle himself varied his ideas on contradiction leads us to ask, was LNC *ever* an indisputable belief? And if it was not, what impact does this have upon the legacy of negation attached to it, manifested in the irrationality that is associated with contradiction and that has resulted in a devaluation of inconsistency? Such devaluation has undermined the political potential of Moraga's work, through a premature dismissal of ideological inconsistencies.

Aristotle's own inability to singularly define contradiction belies the complexity of singularity itself. In summarising just a few of Aristotle's principles of

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[2] As summarised in C.W.A. Whitaker, *Aristotle's* De Interpretatione*: Contradiction and Dialectic* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1996), 183.
[3] In ibid.
[4] Gianluigi Pasquale, for example, reifies Aristotle's statement in concluding that 'the PNC is the most certain first principle of being and thought.' Gianluigi Pasquale, *Aristotle and the Principle of Non-Contradiction* (AcademiaVerlag: Sankt Augustin, 2006), 117.
[5] Aristotle in Patrick Grim, 'What is a Contradiction?' in Graham Priest, JC Beall, and Bradley Armour-Garb (Editors), *The Law of Non-Contradiction* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 2004), 49.

non-contradiction, JC Beall demonstrates that, '"the" so-called law is not one but many,'[6] a few of which he summarises as:

> SIMPLE (NON-)CONTRADICTION: No contradiction is true
>
> ONTOLOGICAL (NON-)CONTRADICTION: No 'being' can instantiate contradictory properties
>
> RATIONALITY (NON-)CONTRADICTION: It is irrational to (knowingly) accept a contradiction.[7]

From these three examples we can see that LNC is only indisputable if we unquestioningly accept the underlying ontological principle that resists the simultaneous existence of opposing properties within a single entity. It is a short step from here, to concluding that the knowing acceptance of a contradiction is an opposition to rationality. If we briefly look at the structure of Aristotelian contradiction, however, it seems that it is possible to oppose the ontological principle, due to the way in which negation is unquestioningly utilised to distinguish between and validate, truth and falsity. This employment of negation not only simplifies divisions of truth and falsity, where one is valued above the other, it also overlooks the potential that resides in the space between such a division, a space in which I situate Moraga's politics, which bring together oppositional elements of social construction and essentialism. Whether or not we believe the components to be incompatible, one true and the other false, the act itself of inconsistency is, I argue, very much a 'real' entity, the dialogic political potential of which is undermined by an Aristotelian framework of contradiction.

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[6] JC Beall, 'Introduction: At the Intersection' in Graham Priest, JC Beall, and Bradley Armour-Garb (Editors), *The Law of Non-Contradiction* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 2004), 3.
[7] Ibid.

Devaluing intersections: negation, truth and falsity

A brief analysis of the structure of Aristotelian contradiction enables us to understand how negation frames truth and falsity as mutually exclusive, and thus unable to occupy the same space, which has implications for the facilitation of dialogue between conflicting elements. The formal usage of contradiction relies on a conjunction of an entity and what is supposed to be its negation, an example of which can be described as $A \wedge \neg A$, where $\wedge$ is conjunction and $\neg$ is negation, or inversion.[8] In this conjunction, A is truth and $\neg A$ is falsity, with truth the desired and valued element: '…truth trumps falsity. Truth is, by its nature, the aim of cognitive processes such as belief…. It is constitutive of truth that this is what one ought to accept. Falsity, by contrast, is merely truth of negation. It has no independent epistemological force.'[9] I suggest, however, that falsity is more than a 'mere' negation. As a negation, falsity serves a relational function, enabling value to be situated with the 'true' entity it opposes. (Can we gauge truth without its oppositional partner; and does the reliance upon such an opposition not make us question the independent epistemological force attributed to truth?) The activity inherent in the functionality of this relationship casts doubt over the Aristotelian nullification of the space between alleged oppositions.

According to Aristotle's formulation, the incompatibility of two contradictory elements means that 'the intersection of truth and falsity is necessarily empty.'[10] This formulation of emptiness is a declaration of binary opposition, where entities differ not by degrees but by inversions, signified by the dividing space that contains remnants of neither entity. Aristotle's empty intersection nullifies the space between

[8] This algebraic example is taken from ibid., 4.
[9] Ibid., 33-34.
[10] Ibid., 3.

contradictory elements, engendering what I prefer to describe as an impasse, drawing upon Patrick Grim's assessment of the stasis between philosophical arguments for and against contradiction, which mirrors the space created between contradictory states, over which these two schools of thought disagree.[11] Impasse acknowledges the meeting of two elements (even if this meeting is in the final event unsuccessful), whereas Aristotle's formulation of an empty intersection denies such an encounter, including the process of exclusion inherent in his denial of contradiction itself, described by Beall. One of the objections to the possibility of contradictions being true, he notes, 'is to the effect that if contradictions could be true, *nothing* could be meaningful. The argument here appeals to the thought that something is meaningful only if it *excludes* something (*omnis determino est negatio*): a claim that rules out nothing, says nothing.'[12]

The process of negation found within Aristotle's objection to contradiction, incorporates exclusion, whereby meaning, conflated with truth, is given shape by discarding what is not thought to correspond to the object of truth in question. In short, we come to know what something is, by acknowledging, and excluding, what it is not. What is to be excluded is not, of course, *a priori* but emanates from the Foucauldian processes of larger, ideological, historical projects that have as their goal the appearance of chronological and cultural 'cohesion', which necessitates exclusionary decisions. The epistemological implications of this process are profound, when we consider the concurrent effect upon ideological and socio-political arenas and the way in which exclusion engenders relations of power (and oppression). Foucault's discussion of attempted cohesion within historical research clarifies these implications, arguing that such an agenda is complicit in the suppression of

[11] Grim, 'What is a Contradiction?'
[12] Beall, 30.

contradiction through a 'moral constraint of research'[13] whose goal is to find an underlying order, or 'hidden unity'[14] that supports a totalizing historical methodology. In this scenario, the means justify the end, dictating the outward shape of history that represents the desired mastering of incongruous elements.

'Discontinuity' argues Foucault, 'was the stigma of temporal dislocation that it was the historian's task to remove from history. It has now become one of the basic elements of historical analysis.'[15] For Foucault, research methodology that encourages the stigmatisation of discontinuity is symptomatic of a project to depict time, and the cultures represented by historical events, as a continuous and thus unified entity, free of fissures or what he refers to as irruptions or dissensions.[16] Such continuity fortifies subject formations:

> Continuous history is the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject: the guarantee that everything that has eluded him may be restored to him; the certainty that time will disperse nothing without restoring it in a reconstituted unity; the promise that one day the subject – in the form of historical consciousness – will once again be able to appropriate, to bring back under his sway, all those things that are kept at a distance by difference, and find in them what might be called his abode.[17]

As we can see from Foucault's articulation, the ability of historical continuity to inform subject formation is an instrument of power, appropriating (or discarding) elements that solidify the appearance of a unified historical consciousness.[18] Differences are (re)incorporated, so that they conform to the desired subject of historical consciousness. Where difference cannot be integrated, it is suppressed

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[13] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Routledge: London and New York, 1989 [first published 1969]), 166.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 9.
[16] Ibid., 6, 173.
[17] Ibid., 13.
[18] This process of enacting historical continuity as a means to establishing subjecthood is applicable to those lacking power, too, as we will see in the later discussion of Chicano nationalism, where the symbol of Aztlán is used to (re)historicize the Chicano subject.

through a law of coherence aimed at establishing unity, which in many ways mirrors Aristotle's Law of Non-Contradiction:

> This law of coherence is a heuristic rule, a procedural obligation, almost a moral constraint of research: not to multiply contradictions uselessly; not to be taken in by small differences; not to give too much weight to changes, disavowals, returns to the past, and polemics; not to suppose that men's discourse is perpetually undermined from within by the contradiction of their desires, the influences that they have been subjected to, or the conditions in which they live; but to admit that if they speak, and if they speak among themselves, it is rather to overcome these contradictions, and to find the point from which they will be able to be mastered.[19]

Like the totalizing effect of Aristotle's LNC that ignores inconsistency – the legacy of which is noted in Foucault's observation of historians' inability to formulate a general theory of discontinuity[20] – coherence is measured, or rather created, through its ability to dispense with contradiction: '[coherence] appears as an optimum: the greatest possible number of contradictions resolved by the simplest means.'[21] This resolution of contradiction is, as Foucault notes above, a form of 'mastery', a process of domination, which does not bring elements together in their disparate forms but rather shapes incongruous entities to a predetermined mould, devaluing the difference and 'contradictory desires' that set them apart, 'As if we were afraid to conceive of the *Other* in the time of our own thought.'[22] Overlooked by this attempt to devalue and extinguish difference, however, is the foundational role of contradiction in discursive formation that buttresses the methodological dogma of historical research:

> …contradiction, far from being an appearance or accident of discourse, far from being that from which it must be freed if its truth is at last to be revealed, constitutes the very law of its existence: it is on the basis of such a contradiction that discourse emerges, and it is in order both to translate it and to overcome it that discourse begins to speak…. Contradiction then, functions throughout discourse, as the principle of its historicity.[23]

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[19] Foucault, 166.
[20] Ibid., 13.
[21] Ibid., 167.
[22] Ibid., 13.
[23] Ibid., 168.

Contrary to Aristotle's empty intersection that denies a link between truth and falsity, contradiction, then, generates discourse through a relation of oppositional elements. This generation does not always follow the discursive aspiration to suppress and dispel contradiction but, I argue, can also be politically effective in demonstrating the presence, subjectivity and value of incongruous elements.

I wish to argue that because the intersection between inconsistent elements is used to establish a relation of power involving proponents of 'truth' determining and overwhelming elements of 'falsity', so too can this site be utilised as a dialogic space, overturning the rigid exclusionary properties of Aristotle's empty intersection and instead utilising the role of contradiction in generating discourse itself. Despite Aristotelian assertions to the contrary, relations between allegedly opposing elements are in place, and where such relations exist, the form of this activity can be transformed to one of compromise rather than conflict or to put it another way, conflict can be utilised rather than discarded. It is the potential of these encounters that this project is concerned with, where the contact between conflicting elements in Moraga's politics encourage the reader to assess the causes for and consequences of such confrontations, and whether any subsequent compromise can be reached that would lead to a more practicable politics. Too rapid a dismissal of Moraga's more questionable politics merely repeats the power dynamics of binary opposition entrenched through LNC and ignores the spectrum between truth and falsity. By acknowledging this scale, not only can we gauge where there may be areas of feasible political action previously ignored through power-generating binaristic exclusions but we are also able to analyse areas where falsities, in Moraga's case, fiction, manifest the properties of being 'truth-makers', interrogating the process of knowledge

formation that denies contradiction and further lessening the power associated with normative formations of truth.

Cherríe Moraga, contradiction and power

'What, exactly, is the worry about having truth-makers for both *A* and ¬ *A*?'[24] One answer to JC Beall's question about contradictory elements that is germane to Moraga's politics, revolves around the dynamics of power: to trouble the process of asserting truth is to make vulnerable the power of knowledge that is associated with it and that has been used to establish an exclusionary hierarchy of values. The worry, then, lies very much with those individuals and institutions that have benefited from the control deriving from contradictory binaries that have enabled (whilst also creating) the exclusion of undesirable elements. It is in response to such singular sites of power that Moraga often forms her identity politics of language, nation and sexuality.

Disputing the authority of what Moraga conceptualises as neo-colonial formations of binaristic authority in the United States that devalue the sociocultural positions of ethnic minorities, the writer draws together supposedly contradictory elements in order to highlight this imbalance of power, consequently demonstrating that such elements can and do coexist, albeit not always peacefully. In short, previously negated elements have the capability of being truth-makers, and troubling singular notions of 'truth'. Spanish and English (and in later works, indigenous languages such as Nahuatl) are used within the same textual pieces, deposing the colonially derived value placed upon English. In response to heteronormative elements of the civil rights era where various strands of nationalism deemed their

[24] Beall, 'Introduction: At the Intersection', 16.

political objectives as incompatible with gender equality and homosexuality, Chicanos, and the symbolic Chicano nation, Aztlán, are foregrounded and reformulated by Moraga to incorporate women and homosexuals. At the same time, Moraga's reconfiguration of the Chicano notion of 'familia' is both an assertion and denial of social construction and essentialism, through the author's simultaneous attempt to 'make familia from scratch,'[25] and her recurring focus on blood as a conduit of cultural identity and memory. How can identity be inscribed in blood if it is also possible to construct forms of socio-familial relationships? If identities are blood-borne and irrefutable, what do we do with Moraga's concurrent assertion that group identities can be constructed? This project suggests that a turn to dialogue, rather than exclusion, offers the greatest chance of answering these questions and benefiting from such contradictions. For dialogue to be possible, however, there must be an acknowledgment of the possibility that some contradictions may be true.

This project's later focus on consciousness-raising and Chela Sandoval's notion of 'differential consciousness' as tools utilised by Moraga and feminists of colour to try and overcome divisive issues within feminist movements, derives in part from the philosophical notion of dialetheism that challenges Aristotle's LNC and thus engenders the possibility that there can sometimes be simultaneous truth-makers. 'Dialetheism,' states Patrick Grim, 'is the view that there are contradictions both sides of which *are* true.'[26] It is important to note as Grim does, that adherents of dialetheism do not think that all contradictions are true, but that only some

[25] 'It's like making familia from scratch / each time all over again… / with strangers, if I must.' This appears in Moraga's play, *Giving Up the Ghost*, and reappears in *Waiting in the Wings*, her semi-autobiographical account of the events around the premature birth of her son. Cherríe Moraga, *Heroes and Saints & Other Plays* (West End Press: Albuquerque, 2000), 35 and *Waiting in the Wings: portrait of a queer motherhood* (Firebrand Books: New York, 1997), 9.
[26] Grim, 'What is a Contradiction?', 49.

contradictions are true.[27] If all contradictions were true (or all false) then the idea of contradiction itself would be redundant and importantly for this project, neither would the potential for dialogue between inconsistent elements be possible. Such potential is noted by Grim, whose analysis of contradiction attempts to overcome the impasse between those who believe contradictions to be false and dialetheists, in order to further the prospect of debate.[28] This desire for debate is, like my own, rooted in the notion that although highly problematic, some contradictions are 'legitimately informative' and thus of value:

> Contradictions do, after all, have meaning. If they did not, we could not even understand someone who asserted a contradiction, and so evaluate what they say as false (or maybe true). We might not understand what could have brought a person to assert such a thing, but that is a different matter….[29]

It is in fact this 'different matter' that is of interest to this project, expanding the promise of dialetheism. The assertion of a contradiction invites an analysis of its underlying motivation(s) and the subsequent conflict. I do not wish to demonstrate that Moraga's contradictory assertions prove that there is merit to both social constructivism and essentialism, for example, but rather that her inconsistencies provide an opportunity to foster dialogue around such conflicts, which is the springboard for this project. This dialogue will ascertain the causes of Moraga's inconsistencies which, I argue, helpfully demonstrate the ways in which attempts at social justice are curtailed through mechanisms such as internalised oppression, and limited political ideologies such as nationalism. Addressing these issues reframes the political potential of Moraga's oeuvre by highlighting the feasibility of previously overlooked elements of her politics, readying them for further development and

[27] This is also noted in Graham Priest, 'What's So Bad About Contradictions?', 23, 29 and Beall, 'Introduction: At the Intersection', 6, 8, both in Graham Priest, JC Beall, and Bradley Armour-Garb (Editors), *The Law of Non-Contradiction* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 2004).
[28] Grim, 71.
[29] Priest, 30.

political action. The 'different matter' producing Moraga's contradictions is her approach to identity politics as a means to answering the question, 'Who is Chicano?'

A subjective oeuvre: inscribing Moraga's identity politics

The work of Cherríe Moraga is primarily concerned with affirming Chicana lesbian subjectivity. This involves interpreting and critiquing the various social roles that have been ascribed to Chicanas, and inscribing those that Moraga wishes to enact. Whilst being lesbian and Chicana can be distinctly defined, Moraga wishes to inscribe an identity where these two categories are inextricable.

Lesbian identity is not, of course, homogeneous, especially around purportedly normative gender roles, where 'butch' and 'femme' roles, for example, have been pathologised in mainstream feminist movements. This pathologisation also fails to account for what Judith Halberstam terms, 'the specificities of different sexual cultures'[30] of women of colour, evident in Moraga's assessment that

> What I need to explore will not be found in the lesbian feminist bedroom, but more likely in the mostly heterosexual bedrooms of South Texas, L.A., or even Sonora, México…. [T]he boundaries white feminists confine themselves to in describing sexuality are based in white-rooted interpretations of dominance, submission, power-exchange, etc. Although they are certainly *part* of the psychosexual lives of women of color, these boundaries would have to be expanded and translated to fit my people… (*LWY, 117*).[31]

To circumvent the boundaries created by white feminism that delimit women of colour's embodiment of sexuality, Moraga turns to an inscription that is able to accommodate 'My people'.

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[30] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 122.

[31] On the conflict within mainstream lesbian feminism around gender presentation, see Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), 258-262.

Chican*a* is the female gendered form of the term *Chicano*, which came about, argues Ramon Gutierrez, '[a]s Mexican-American civil rights activism metamorphosed into the militant nationalism of the Chicano Movement, between 1955 and 1970[.] Chicanos were defined as immigrant working men of Mexican peasant origin. They were heroic, indefatigable men, struggling against an exploitative capitalist labor regime.'[32] Alongside labour activism there existed a strong contingent of student activists, who engendered the cultural nationalism that remains the most potent element of the Chicano Movement. The Chicano Movement was not a single political party but as the name suggests, an overarching name for the collective efforts of various Mexican American groups who were engaging in civil rights activism, from the pacifist United Farm Workers union famously headed by César Chávez, to the militant Brown Berets and Los Comancheros.[33] The agendas of these groups were articulated in various declarations including 'The Plan of Delano', a 1965 proclamation produced by the National Farm Workers Association who had joined Filipino grape pickers in striking for better wages and working conditions, and the 1969 'El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan', produced during the Chicano Liberation Youth Conference.[34] These two documents foreground a constituency comprised of predominantly agricultural workers, students, and artists, united in achieving the

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[32] Ramon Gutierrez, 'Chicano History: Paradigm Shifts and Shifting Boundaries', *JSRI Occasional Paper #15* (East Lansing, Michigan: The Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, 1997).

[33] In their 1968 Declaration, Los Comancheros affirmed 'the right to keep and bear arms to defend our homes and communities against racist police, as guaranteed under the Second Amendment of the Constitution.' 'Los Comancheros: A Declaration' in Luis Valdez and Stan Steiner (Eds.), *Aztlan: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 310. On the pacifism of César Chávez, see John C. Hammerback and Richard J. Jensen, *The Rhetorical Career of César Chávez*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1998); and Richard Griswold del Castillo and Richard A. Garcia, *César Chávez: A Triumph of Spirit* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).

[34] 'El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan' and 'The Plan of Delano' both appear in Valdez and Steiner, *Aztlan: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature*.

Chicano goal of 'total liberation from oppression, exploitation and racism.'[35] As implied by Gutierrez's self-conscious focus on men, however, the impossibility of 'total liberation' soon became apparent when women within the Chicano Movement brought to light the sexism that was preventing the Chicano Movement from enacting liberation for its male *and* female constituents:

> Although the Chicano movement – an insurgent uprising among a new political generation of Mexican-Americans –challenged persistent patterns of societal inequality in the United States, it ignited a political debate between Chicanas and Chicanos based on the internal gender contradictions prevalent within El Movimiento. Chicana feminists produced an ideological critique of the Chicano cultural nationalist movement that struggled against social injustice yet maintained patriarchal structures of domination. Chicana feminist thought reflected a historical struggle by women to overcome sexist oppression but still affirm a militant ethnic consciousness. As they forged a feminist consciousness, Chicana feminists searched for the elusive "room of their own" within the socio-historical and political context of the Chicano movement.[36]

It is at this juncture that female activists within the movement sought to distinguish their commitment to a form of Chicano civil rights that incorporated gender equality, by utilising gendered Spanish language to signify the female form of Chicano: Chican*a*.

This simple linguistic alteration is also a profound cultural signification, linking a history of patriarchy to the deficiencies of modern-day civil rights that foreground male leadership and citizenship. For Mexican American women involved in the Chicano Movement, declaring oneself 'Chicana' heralded what Angie Chabram Dernersesian has called, 'the splitting of Chicana/o subjectivity,' whereby 'Chicanas consciously disassociated themselves from male hegemonic constructions of group

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[35] 'El Plan', 403-404.
[36] Alma M. García (Ed.), *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 1.

identity.'[37] This splitting of male and female Mexican American subjectivity, argues Chabram Dernersesian, occurred in two stages:

> In the first stage, Chicana subjects are either displaced from group characterizations or mediated by systems of differentiation that privileged male forms of identity and subjectivity. In the second stage, these forms are either subverted or displaced by alternate definitions, which foreground Chicanas as individual speaking subjects and in group characterizations; entrust them with their own self-definitions and subject positions; and combat male-oriented figurations of Chicanas.[38]

Even before Chicanas were labelled as such, then, a split, gendered subjectivity placed women outside the parameters of Chicano collectivity. These women did, of course, exist, and contributed to the cultural and political life of Mexican Americans, as evidenced through the work of historians such as Vicki Ruiz, Catherine Ramírez and Maylei Blackwell.[39] In line with addressing this gendered historical dissonance, Moraga's work aims to demonstrate that these women still exist; that, like Moraga herself, there are Mexican American women who align themselves to the ethnic consciousness of Chicano nationalism but at the same time seek to subvert the oppressive forms of heteronormative privilege within the Movement by 'deliberately imposing their own selective processes onto the cultural subject being represented.'[40] This process of selection, a politics of identity, is at the core of Moraga's attempt to

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[37] Angie Chabram Dernersesian, 'And, Yes … The Earth Did Part: On the Splitting of Chicana/o Subjectivity' in Adela de la Torre and Beatríz M. Pesquera (Eds.), *Building with Our Hands: New Directions in Chicana Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 39.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Historian Vicki Ruiz has researched and co-edited works that demonstrate the wide-ranging and extensive social and political roles played by Latinas throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that have often been overlooked. Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Vicki L. Ruiz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol (Eds.), *Latina Legacies: Identity, Biography, and Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Catherine Ramírez and Maylei Blackwell have also focused on the contributions of Mexican American women to specific cultural-political movements of the twentieth century, the 'pachuca' of the 1940s and Chicana feminists, respectively: Catherine S. Ramírez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009); Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (University of Texas Press: Austin, 2011).
[40] Dernersesian, 40.

inscribe the existence of a multifarious Chicana subjectivity that is at once broad and specific enough to accommodate the categories of gender and sexuality, 'which had been subsumed under the universal ethnic denomination *Chicano*.'[41]

To enable women and homosexuals to answer in the affirmative to the question of whether or not they are Chicana/o and thus declare their nationalist political affiliation, Moraga uses identity politics to articulate her Chicana subjectivity. It is with Moraga's identity politics that the overriding contradiction woven throughout the writer's work is situated, as she alternates the articulation of her Chicana subjectivity between social constructivist and essentialist voices. Before outlining my attempt to demonstrate the consequences and potential utility of this contradiction, it is necessary to understand what is meant by identity politics and how it is framed as both social constructivist and essentialist in Moraga's writing.

Whilst it could be argued that a politics of identity has existed for centuries, with tribes, kingdoms, republics and nation states advancing their legitimacy and supremacy by endorsing collective characteristics that symbolise cohesion and strength, late twentieth-century identity politics are often associated with, and criticised for, foregrounding a rhetoric of inclusion that focuses on socially marginalised aspects of identity such as race, ethnicity and sexuality. I define 'identity politics' as any political framework whose objective is to further the rights and ideals of a people based upon the facets of identity by which they are categorised. Such a broad definition is apt, given the number of ways in which identity politics has been interpreted and variously (sometimes surreptitiously) utilised by those both Left and

[41] Ibid., 39.

Right of the political spectrum, even though it is predominately associated with the Left. Writing in the late 1980s about the lessons to be learned from identity politics in rethinking the Left and national apoliticism, Rosalind Brunt usefully outlines the types of characteristics with which this mode of politics has come to be associated, and the consequent purpose: '"Identity politics" has been current for some time as contextual shorthand for movements organising around sexuality, gender and ethnicity and working to translate 'the personal is the political' into everyday practice.'[42] The rationale for involving varied lived experiences within political frameworks is transformative, both in questioning existing political agendas whose ignorance or suppression of diverse lives limits their applicability and efficacy, and in combating apoliticism that stems from these limitations by opening up politics to these previously marginalised peoples.[43]

Although writing about British politics, Brunt's focus on the ability of identity politics to widen political audiences demonstrates how its transformative quality emanates from the potential of its social constructionist affinity: 'A politics whose starting point is about recognising the degree to which political activity and effort involves a continuous process of making and re-making ourselves – and our selves in relation to others – must rightfully be available for anyone to make up as they go along.'[44] Such a wide-reaching, inclusive approach to politics makes the success of a political project more attainable, dependent as it is upon 'match[ing] the twin criteria of correctness and effectivity.'[45] The turn to identity politics is an attempt to increase the likelihood of this pairing of appropriateness and efficacy, by making politics

[42] Rosalind Brunt, 'The Politics of Identity' in Stuart Hall & Martin Jacques (Eds.), *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s* (Lawrence & Wishart: London, 1989), 151.
[43] Ibid., 150-151.
[44] Ibid., 151.
[45] Ibid.

subjectively relevant, as Gramsci recognised years before contemporary proponents of identity politics: 'Gramsci's point was that if revolutionaries were to develop a clear and coherent conception of the world they wanted to change they should make a start by asking how people experienced the world as it was, how they got by and coped with it on a daily basis.'[46] Such a micro-level starting point, intended to draw links between the individual and wider, macro-level politics at local, national and global levels, has often been the target of critiques of identity politics that ignore the consequent dialogic intention of moving between micro- and macro-levels. These critiques often emanate from essentialist notions of politics and identity, fundamentally resistant to the transformative potential of a social constructivist approach.

My own approach to identity politics is that it is politically viable if, as with Gramsci and Brunt's interpretations, it acts as a tool to gauge our position within, not outside, society even if this position is undesirable, in order to make more appropriate who and what is represented politically. In other words, I see the utility of identity politics in its potential to create an evaluative dialogue between the populace and its spokespeople by appropriately acknowledging the full gamut of citizenry and the political powers that do (or do not) represent them and their civil liberties. I do not see identity politics as a standalone apparatus; it should function with and through other forms of political organisation in order to 'render a more rigorous and dynamic concept'[47] of political ideologies, just as individuals such as Moraga argue that it is impossible to separate the numerous strands of identity that constitute their existence.

In the United States context that informs and drives Moraga's political approach, identity politics has predominantly been critiqued for what is perceived to

[46] Ibid., 153-154.
[47] Ibid., 150.

be an endorsement of separatism around racial and ethnic groupings that threatens to unravel the fabric of the republic, 'one nation under God, indivisible.' These critiques derive from a threat to singularity, quashing contradiction and thus diversity in an interpretation of nation as culturally and ethnically singular. This assumption takes its philosophical cue from the idea that contradiction (diversity) is impossible and as with Aristotle's LNC, this line of thought is structurally resistant to dialogue or change. Ironically, detractors of identity politics also level the accusation against proponents (and sometimes correctly so, as seen through the strictures of Chicano nationalism), that their agenda is singular and therefore anathema to the egalitarian American ideal of a melting pot. The result is an impasse fostered by, between and amongst those both for and against identity politics through a failure to see identity as a contradictory entity, a stalemate visible in Moraga's oeuvre where her attempts to engender diversity are hampered by an essentialist approach to identity politics. Before we analyse Moraga's flawed promotion of diversity, however, we must better understand the debate around identity politics in the United States and how it informs my investigation of Moraga's political approach to contradiction.

Referring to identity politics as a 'cult of ethnicity' and 'culture wars' respectively, Arthur Schlesinger and Todd Gitlin's bellicose and condescending declarations outline some of the key oppositions to identity politics.[48] As with many detractors, Schlesinger and Gitlin focus their critiques of identity politics upon ethnicity-focused projects. Schlesinger centres his opposition to identity politics, in his aptly titled *The Disuniting of America,* on the threat it poses to the desired outcome of the 'melting pot': assimilation. For Schlesinger, assimilation is

[48] Arthur M. Schlesinger, jr., *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 1998 [originally published 1991]) and Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of the Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked by Culture Wars* (Henry Holt: New York, 1995).

democratic, placing citizens on an even keel by allowing them to discard the strictures of cultural baggage and start afresh:

> *E pluribus unum*: one out of many. The United States has a brilliant solution for the inherent fragility, the inherent combustibility, of a multiethnic society: the creation of a brand new national identity by individuals who, in forsaking old loyalties and joining to make new lives, melted away ethnic differences – a national identity that absorbs and transcends the diverse ethnicities that come to our shore, ethnicities that enrich and reshape the common culture in the very act of entering into it.[49]

Rather than ethnicity or race, this new national identity is underpinned by 'civic commitment', described by de Tocqueville as a 'law of the soil' rather than a 'law of blood' by which potential 'citizens, newcomers had only to swear to support and defend the Constitution and the laws of the land.'[50] Whilst most American citizens would agree with this defence of the Constitution (and naturalized immigrants are legally bound to through the 'Oath of Allegiance'), Schlesinger's description of national civic character that is paradoxically enriched by diverse ethnicities that are 'melted away', betrays a lack of understanding of individual complexity and contradiction, and the consequent link between individual and state apparatus described above by Brunt. Schlesinger's assessment of a multiethnic society as inherently combustible demonstrates a predetermined resistance to cultural diversity governed by the notion that it is impossible for differing entities to simultaneously co-exist. Whilst he quite rightly notes that cultural pluralism itself is not the issue but ethnocentrism is,[51] Schlesinger's generalisations of identity politics, which do not adequately address forms of identity other than ethnicity such as gender and sexuality, merely propagate the notion of identity politics as a divisive agenda whose goal is the balkanisation of the United States rather than unity in difference. Continuing the

[49] Schlesinger, 17.
[50] Ibid., 32.
[51] Ibid., 81.

argument of identity politics as separatist ethnocentrism is Todd Gitlin, whose discussion of 'culture wars' takes place within the arena of education.

Gitlin's critique of identity politics focuses on the debate arising from publishing group Houghton Mifflin's history and social science textbook series of the early1990s.[52] Houghton Mifflin's kindergarten-through-eighth-grade textbooks came under immense scrutiny and criticism following accusations from CURE (Communities United Against Racism in Education) that they were ethnocentric, presenting an Anglo-focused history of the United States.[53] For Gitlin, attacks on the textbooks, which he regards as 'the most pluralist textbooks ever brought before the state of California,'[54] demonstrated nothing more than an abuse of historical purpose; a conflation of historical record and social justice, where history is sacrificed in the name of 'ancestor worship'[55] and a search for ethnic role models that is misguidedly considered as a solution to social ills. In support of the conventional historical sequencing of Gary B. Nash, one of the contributors to the textbook series, Gitlin argues:

> History should be neither a feel-good exercise nor a census of the experiences of preferred peoples. It should not be simply an inventory of "contributions," as if the historian's mission were to distribute party favors. Its purpose is not to make anyone "proud" of any group's historical record. Whether one likes the status quo or not, history should be, in important part, the record of what power has done. A student who does not know how the powerful acted – indeed, often over the objections of the weak and the oppressed – cannot begin to understand why the world has become what it is.[56]

There is no connection, for Gitlin, between the machinations of historiographical practice and their potential to enact rather than merely record power, and the 'real

[52] Gitlin, *The Twilight of the Common Dreams.*
[53] Ibid., 10.
[54] Ibid., 28.
[55] Ibid., 40.
[56] Ibid., 20.

stakes'[57] of social (in)justice, even though he elsewhere admits that the mission of the textbooks is to 'cultivate [a] common interest' in 'a shared constitutional faith [in the name of which] the weaker go up against the stronger and fight, neither easily nor irresistibly, to extend democratic rights against concentrations of power.'[58] A noble historical endeavour, but an ideological one nonetheless that undermines Gitlin's distinction between the practice of history and the everyday lives of its protagonists. Despite this glaring inconsistency, Gitlin's focus on identity politics and education does draw out the paradoxical way in which ethnicity is sometimes taught through identity politics whilst making the claim that it is innate. In other words, certain examples of identity politics promote the prior existence of ethnicity whilst creating and entrenching it, leading us to ask, if a characteristic is capable of being learned, does this not undermine the argument that it is innate? (And is it helpful, as Werner Sollors has asked in the context of the organisation of American literature, to teach the very categorisations that have been used to separate us? [59]) This paradox is central to understanding Moraga's struggle between social construction and essentialism, as it demonstrates the tension between desired heterogeneity and the greater logical and social value (and thus political power) placed upon a notion of singular permanence.

In Gitlin's narrative of the responses to the Houghton Mifflin texts from proponents of identity politics, we see the value placed upon finding ways to essentialise ethnic characteristics through the teaching of history. Whilst I remain wary of Gitlin's focus on a few extreme proponents of identity politics, these examples nonetheless demonstrate the insidious way in which social progressiveness

[57] Ibid., 29.
[58] Ibid., 40.
[59] In Katrin Schwenk, 'Introduction: Thinking about "Pure Pluralism"' in Winfried Siemerling and Katrin Schwenk (Eds.), *Cultural Difference and the Literary Text: Pluralism and the Limits of Authenticity in North American Literatures* (University of Iowa Press: Iowa City, 1996), 2.

and egalitarianism are at times imagined as achievable only by utilising an essentialist structure. My chapter on Moraga's approach to education addresses bilingualism rather than the history syllabus but it also arises from the contentious presence of identity politics in educational settings that demonstrates an instructive contradiction between an egalitarian agenda and the seemingly indispensable essentialism used to defend it. In this situation, singularity is prioritised resulting in desired equality for one group overtaking an agenda of equality for all: Moraga's focus on prioritising bilingual education for Latinos – in a similar vein to the Houghton Mifflin opponents who argued that there is a connection between experiences of racism and educational provision[60] – has the potential to undermine the efforts of other groups (various Native American, for example), some of whose languages are facing extinction. Rather than a consequence of identity politics *per se*, these limitations of essentialism are manifest in wider politics, where movements and parties both left and right of the spectrum are locked in competition for political authority and superiority. And neither is competition waged solely between differing political goals; the persistent philosophical limitation of non-contradiction that validates singularity is evident in the suppression of intra-group dissent. That this repression occurs even within minority groups attempting to redress their lack of civil rights in wider society, demonstrates the social entrenchment of philosophical non-contradiction, which is exposed through Moraga's political inconsistency between her condemnation of the sexist and homophobic Chicano Movement, and her own essentialisations.

A common and potent framework used to quash diversity within political movements, is the trope of betrayal. Through the recurring use of La Malinche, this theme permeates Moraga's oeuvre. In a recuperative inversion of the narrative of a

[60] Gitlin, 32.

woman's treacherous translations that contributed to the triumph of the Spanish conquistadores, Moraga uses the figure of La Malinche to symbolise the betrayal of women through patriarchal structures that curtail their agency. This theme finds a correlation in the language emanating from the ongoing impasse between proponents of singularity and diversity. Competition between and within differing political movements to establish their own 'truths' is often enacted through the placement of oppressions within a hierarchy: multiple truths exist, but are ordered into a system that only allows them to be addressed in turn, implying their inability to occur simultaneously. Attempts to dismantle hierarchies of oppression are greeted similarly to opponents of LNC, as irrational and dangerous attempts to disturb the philosophical superiority of singularity, and political responses to such attempts have often been articulated in the language of betrayal where loyalty to political cause is conflated with a loyalty to reason itself, just as Rosalind Brunt highlights in her discussion of Leftist opposition to identity politics as being, 'couched in the language of betrayal and loss. "You're abandoning class; you've lost faith in the working people" has so often been the accusation about any attempt to use a politics of identity to render a more rigorous and dynamic concept of class….'[61] As Brunt implies here, identity politics should not be a standalone entity, a one-cause issue: '…calling identity 'indispensable' is not to make it suddenly the only, or even the main, item on the political agenda, and thereby consign all previous ideas and issues to olden times.'[62] Instead, certain attempts of identity-centred groups to broaden the goals of mainstream politics in order to make it more functional for the citizens it represents, have demonstrated a similar philosophical limitation that assumes the inability of

[61] Brunt, 'The Politics of Identity', 150.
[62] Ibid.

movements to simultaneously address multiple issues from multiple perspectives, and the inability of political actors to ascribe to more than one identity.

The language of betrayal is used to reinforce philosophical assumptions by essentialising political actors in a binaristic manner ('You're either with us or against us'). Despite attempting to reconfigure representations of the populace to ensure a consequently adequate political representation, political movements (including those from which Moraga draws inspiration) have at times fallen into the same discursive pattern of presenting select identity facets as worthier of political attention than others, labelling those who object to this hierarchy as traitorous. Moraga and others have recognised this discrepancy, pointing out the failures of cultural nationalists who simply repeat the establishment and entrenchment of the very binaristic structures that their nationalism is intended to interrogate, and demanding a revision of their political aims. Conversely, in other areas of her work, Moraga maintains the significance of singular notions of identity, insisting upon the pre-determined fixedness of ethnic identity. In my analysis of identity politics in Moraga's work that questions the inconsistent presence of both social constructivist and essentialist political practices, it will become evident that the metaphorical cycle of betrayal continues, in the incapacity to accommodate contradiction.

Having established my focus on identity politics as a means to investigate contradiction through the tension between social constructivist and essentialist approaches to identity, I will now outline how this investigation will be extended through an analysis of Moraga's articulations of identity politics, and how this examination will contribute to a dialogue on the utility of contradiction. Identity politics appears in Moraga's work most notably in her incorporation of nationalism, which she both interrogates and perpetuates. Moraga argues for the socio-political

recognition, acceptance and encouragement of ethnocultural indicators such as language and race, in her opposition to the abolition of bilingual education (which is linked to discussions around institutional racism) and her promotion of 'la raza bronce' that emanates from the racial pride of Chicano nationalism and other civil rights movements.

In the essay, 'Queer Aztlán', Chicano nationalism itself is critiqued by Moraga for not engendering a thorough politics of identity, through a refusal to address sexism and homophobia within the movement. This focus on simultaneously occurring forms of identity oppression is an extension of the need for 'integrated analysis and practice' discussed in *This Bridge Called My Back* (*Bridge*, 210) that works toward an elimination of *all* forms of oppression, through an understanding of how they are often interlinked. The need for such an integrated analysis also highlights not only national but also intracultural pluralism, where various facets of identity are presented at the same time, demanding an equal distribution of cultural value: by announcing her goal to bring 'all the parts of me – Chicana, lesbian, half-breed, and poeta – to the revolution' (*LG*, 146), Moraga makes it clear that her identity cannot be reduced to any single cultural denominator.

To make possible a cultural revolution that overturns prescribed normative constructions of family and community, Moraga implicitly takes a social constructivist approach to her reconfiguration of Chicano nationalism. Just as 'nationalist leaders used a kind of "selective memory," drawing exclusively from those aspects of Mexican and Native cultures that served the interests of male heterosexuals' (*LG*, 156), Moraga constructs a new version of Chicano nationalism 'that could embrace *all* its people, including its jotería' (*LG*, 147). Moraga's attempt to 'make familia from scratch' (*HS*, 35), applicable to her conception of both

nationalist movement and individual families, demonstrates a cognizance and utilisation of social construction as a political tool to alleviate oppression by demonstrating the cultural value of marginalised identity formations. In other words, if the status quo does not accommodate the political agency of Chicanas and homosexual Chicana/os, it must be socially reconstructed to do so. Such identity politics, which aim to alleviate oppression by demonstrating that there is cultural value to marginalised identity formations, are inconsistent, however, with Moraga's essentialism.

Although Moraga's vision of a queer Aztlán aims to engender diversity it is, nonetheless, based upon a nationalist framework, which inherently encourages exclusion. Moraga alludes to the dangers of nationalism in *The Hungry Woman*, where a cultural revolution results in the balkanisation of the United States, and a counter-revolution results in the initial revolutionaries being exiled, mirroring the narrative of Chicanas marginalised from the Chicano Movement due to their gender and/or sexuality. Moraga, however, does not associate the exclusionary devices of nationalism with her own exclusionary approach to aspects of identity such as race, ignoring the possibility that to justify one form of exclusion is to justify all. Moraga does not adequately interrogate the contradictions she presents, which is what this project aims to do, in the tradition of Rosalind Brunt's assessment of identity politics: 'The politics of identity recognises that there will be many struggles, and perhaps a few celebrations, and writes into all of them a welcome to contradiction and complexity.'[63] Through this project it will become evident that for Moraga, contradiction remains unwelcome, demonstrating an entrenchment of non-contradiction that elucidates the limited efficacy of her politics. My project welcomes

[63] Ibid., 158.

Moraga's contradictions, and an analysis of them, in order to foster dialogue where there has previously been an impasse between social construction and essentialism. This dialogue will not necessarily find common ground between instances of social construction and essentialism, but rather, the work of recognising where there is deadlock between the two will locate areas in need of reconfiguration in order for Moraga's ideas to better engender social justice. To locate these generative areas, however, we must understand the Chicano nationalist framework of Moraga's work, which attempts to produce political activism through artistic production.

Writing as activism: ● CHICANO ART is not art for ART'S SAKE but ART for HUMAN SAKE ●[64]

As community-based creative writing projects such as 'Indígena as Scribe' demonstrate, Moraga's political activism does not occur in ways we might expect, through participation in the actions of the Chicano Movement that has inspired her nationalism. As Moraga has admitted, during the late 60s and 70s, she was 'not an active part of la causa': 'I never managed to get myself to walk in the marches in East Los Angeles (I merely watched from the sidelines)' and 'witnessed ten miles away on television news reports' the Chicano Moratorium of 1970 (*LWY*, 184). The recognition of this peripheral political position is communicated through the parentheses that surround such comments. Moraga is surrounded by the political activism of the Chicano Movement but is unable to partake, due to the violence she would have faced as a seemingly Anglo-assimilated lesbian feminist: 'I would have been murdered in El Movimiento at the time – light-skinned, unable to speak Spanish

[64] Melisio Casas, unpublished artist's statement, 1983, in Richard Griswold del Castillo, Teresa McKenna and Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano (Eds.), *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985* (Los Angeles: Wight Art Gallery, University of California, 1990), 20.

well enough to hang; miserably attracted to women and fighting it; and constantly questioning all authority, including men's' (*LWY*, 104). Rather, Moraga's activism is grounded in the political inscription of a Chicana lesbian subjectivity through artistic production.

Moraga's immersion in literary studies provided her with a conception of the political utility of art that has influenced her approach to writing as an aid to political consciousness:

> In the 1970s I read imaginative literature because it was more complex than psychology, truer than history, and as hungry as any art; and as such, literature and its makers became my teachers. So I fell in love with literature, looked to literature for personal insights into political contradictions, as I also sought to extract from poems, novels and essays the political meaning of my most intimate personal preguntas. (*LWY*, 171)

Literature provides the necessary complexity to depict the wealth of human emotion and curiosity, the never-ending search for a reflection that will validate our lived experiences. For Moraga, however, attending college at a time when 'Chicano' was a relatively novel characterisation, there existed a shortage of literary examples from which to draw upon: 'Twenty-five years ago […] there was little personal "me" to read. That "me," Chicana and lesbian, had not been invented. But race and racism had' (*LWY*, 171). The paucity of published minority women writers has been compounded for Moraga by what she regards as the tendency of the university system to curtail insurrection through a promotion of prevailing theoretical frameworks that maintains the dominance (and careers) of an intellectual (Anglo) elite: 'The university allows a benign liberalism, even a healthy degree of radical transgressive thought, as long as it remains just that: *thought* translated into the conceptual language of the dominant class to be consumed by academics of the dominant class, and as such rendered useless to the rest of us' (*LWY*, 173). Without 'that meeting place of mind and matter,' where thought is translated into action, academic institutions 'remain

incompatible to the body and its needs' (*LWY*, 175). Where writing is compatible with the body is in its ability to imagine the body itself, to imagine alternatives to the bodies that populate canonical literature. While academic institutions may curtail canonical parameters and interpretations, for Moraga, the act of writing remains a generative process where the racialised body of the Chicana lesbian can be inscribed.[65] Finding academe guilty of encouraging 'cultural genocide for non-dominant cultures (*LWY*, 175)' through its reliance on European models of theory and philosophy, Moraga's writing instead utilises a political framework that also encourages the production of art as activism, and that argues for the reconfiguration of American public institutions and their policies that will acknowledge the bodies and histories of Mexican American citizens: Chicano nationalism.

'As an ideology,' argues Alma Garcia, '*Chicanismo* [Chicano cultural nationalism] crystallized the essence of a nationalist ideology: a collective ethnic consciousness.'[66] Nationalism, then, is an ideology encompassing notions of nation, a greatly contested entity. Ernest Renan's 1882 lecture, 'Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?' is particularly helpful in clarifying what might constitute a 'nation.' A nation cannot be defined through race, language, material interest, religious affinity, geography and military necessity, all of which 'invite […] people to unite, but [do] not force them to do so.'[67] Instead, Renan argues that 'A nation is […] a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those

[65] Whilst Moraga's concerns over the Western university system are valid, as displayed in her community-based writing programmes that involve queer young people and women of colour, this does problematise her acceptance of a position as Artist in Residence at an Ivy League institution, an issue that warrants greater exploration than is possible within this project.
[66] Alma García, *Chicana Feminist Thought*, 3.
[67] Ernest Renan, 'What is a nation?' (1882) in Homi K. Bhabha (Ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), 16.

that one is prepared to make in the future.'[68] This idea of solidarity refers to history as well as present day agendas of nationalism, whereby the principle of a nation '…is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories' as well as 'present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received.'[69] As well as having a common history,

> …the essence of a nation is that all individuals […] have forgotten many things…. There are not ten families in France that can supply proof of their Frankish origin, and any such proof would anyway be essentially flawed, as a consequence of countless unknown alliances which are liable to disrupt any genealogical system.[70]

This brings us to Benedict Anderson's oft-quoted *Imagined Communities*, which extends Renan's ideas on nation and (lack of) memory in order to focus less on categorising nationalism as an ideology, instead conceptualising nation as 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.'[71] This does not mean that nation, or 'nation-ness' as Anderson calls it, lacks the value associations emanating from ideology; indeed, '…nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time.'[72] In line with Renan's French example, Anderson argues the nation is '*imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.'[73] If we can imagine a communion, can Renan's 'rich legacy of memories' not also derive from the imagination? It is this discrepancy between imagination and actuality that has led to paradoxes that Anderson argues has perplexed theorists of nationalism, one of which highlights the problems associated

[68] Ibid., 19.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., 11.
[71] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 6.
[72] Ibid., 3.
[73] Ibid., 6.

with utilising nationalism as a political tool: 'The objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists.'[74]

The 'subjective antiquity' of nationalists resulting from the inevitable elisions of memory that occur over time between modern nation states and the societies from which they derive, is of particular interest to this project. Moraga's writing does indeed paradoxically utilise modern strategies and conceptions of nation and nationality in order to establish the veracity of ancient civilisations such as the Aztec. This is, however, a strategy born out of an anticolonial agenda that attempts to curtail the effects of colonialism's *forced* suppression of cultural memory; of a colonised people's cultural connections to their pre-colonial, pre-subjugated societies.

Frantz Fanon's writing on the 'cultural estrangement' experienced by colonized peoples, demonstrates the connection between Moraga's anti-assimilationism and her attempt to 'remember' a pre-colonial Mexican American history:

> I am ready to concede that on the plane of factual being the past existence of an Aztec civilization does not change anything very much in the diet of the Mexican peasant today…. But it has been remarked several times that this passionate search for a national culture which existed before the colonial era finds its legitimate reason in the anxiety shared by native intellectuals to shrink away from that Western culture in which they all risk being swamped. Because they realise they are in danger of losing their lives and thus becoming lost to their people, these men […] relentlessly determine to renew contact once more with the oldest and most pre-colonial springs of life of their people.[75]

Fanon recognises the material incongruity between pre- and post-colonial societies but he also perceives the contemporary value of pre-colonial cultures to descendents experiencing the erasure of cultural elements through colonisation. A connection to pre-colonial cultures substantiates present day claims of assimilation that, although post-colonial in the sense of occurring after the disassembling of colonies,

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[74] Ibid., 5.
[75] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin, 2001), 168-169.

nonetheless perform a colonial function. It is this Western subsumption of modern-day peoples with pre-colonial cultural ties that politically motivates Moraga's writing:

> I write […] recognizing the full impact of the colonial "experiment" on the lives of Chicanos, mestizos, and Native Americans. Our codices – dead leaves unwritten – lie smoldering in the ashes of disregard, censure, and erasure. *The Last Generation* emerges from those ashes. I write it against time, out of a sense of urgency that Chicanos are a disappearing tribe, out of a sense of this disappearance in my own familia.' […] 'My tíos' children have not taught their own children to be Mexicans. They have become "Americans." And we're all supposed to quietly accept this passing, this slow and painless death of a cultura, this invisible disappearance of a people. But I do not accept it. I write. I write as I always have, but now I write for a much larger familia. (*LG*, 2)

Informed by 'progressive nationalisms: Chicano nationalism, Black nationalism, Puerto Rican Independence,' that forwarded an 'unabashed anti-assimilationism' (*LG*, 149), Moraga encourages an intergenerational transfer of culture, where younger generations are educated in their Mexican heritage. Where this heritage has been obfuscated, Moraga *creates* memories out of the remains of historical, cultural and familial narratives.

Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities does not imply that nations result from fabrication in the manner that Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm do.[76] Instead, Anderson argues that, 'Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. Javanese villagers have always known that they are connected to people they have never seen, but these ties were once imagined particularistically – as indefinitely stretchable nets of kinship and clientship.'[77] Although Anderson's work focuses on Southeast Asia, his idea of a kinship network that withstands chronological alterations is nonetheless helpful to understanding how Moraga (and other Chicana/os) imagine the Chicano nation as a family – *la raza*, or *la familia* – that have in common a threatened mestizo

[76] Anderson, 6; and E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 10.
[77] Anderson, 6.

identity of indigenous American and Spanish descent. How this Chicano family is imagined is the very work of nationalism which, drawing from the work of Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm defines as, 'primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent…. In short, […] nationalism comes before nations. Nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way round.'[78] Nationalism, then, is the making of the nation, the Chicano family. Whilst there is value in the creativity that allows citizens of contemporary nations to articulate collectivities that combat the oppression of assimilation, nationalism also engenders limitation, which is evident in the strictures of Chicanismo's conceptualisation of la familia.

'The nation is imagined as *limited,'* argues Anderson, 'because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind.'[79] The boundaries of the nation are established not only geographically but also culturally, as the various processes used to define citizens of the nation also work to exclude others. As Hobsbawm argues, 'kinship' and 'blood' 'have obvious advantages in bonding together members of a group and excluding outsiders.'[80] Or as Judith Butler says of the juridical and dispositional nature of the state that 'is supposed to service the matrix for the obligations and prerogatives of citizenship,' 'If the state is what "binds," it is also clearly what can and does unbind. And if the state binds in the name of the nation, conjuring a certain version of the nation forcibly, if not powerfully, then it also unbinds, releases, expels, banishes.'[81]

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[78] Ernest Gellner quoted in Hobsbawm, 9-10.
[79] Anderson, 7.
[80] Hobsbawm, 63.
[81] Judith Butler and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation-State? Language, Politics, Belonging* (London: Seagull Books, 2007), 3, 4-5.

Whilst the constitution of a nation relates to the political purpose of nationalism (the goal of Chicanismo, for example, is to define Chicanos in order to protect them from Anglo cultural assimilation within the United States), the arbitrary limitations of the nation, such as geography, language, race, ethnicity and religion, betray a political myopia that creates unrest *within* the nation. From a popular-revolutionary perspective, 'nation' represented 'the common interest against particular interests, the common good against privilege….'[82] Such a perspective, whilst emanating from a desire to distinguish class divides, has also resulted in the incapacity to accommodate heterogeneity: 'the more one and indivisible [the nation] claimed to be, the more heterogeneity within it created problems.'[83] This in evident in the Chicano Movement, where the 'common good' of cultural sovereignty for Chicanos is conflated with a patriarchal family (and political) structure, where Chicana attempts to assert a female, anti-patriarchal subjectivity are regarded as a challenge to the common national goal. Although Chicana/os are united in preventing Anglo assimilation, they are not always united in what defines a Chicana/o. Who constitutes the Chicano 'nation' – 'Who sings the nation-state', to paraphrase Butler and Gayatri Spivak[84] – is still (and perhaps should always be) debatable. This articulation of who populates the nation has become a key component of Chicana/o cultural production. This nationalist-influenced process of production linking artistic output to political ideology is embraced by Moraga who, as we have seen, regards artistic production as a political tool.

Chicano cultural production has, since the beginnings of the Chicano Movement, been regarded as a tool of cultural nationalism. This has particularly been

[82] Hobsbawm, 20.
[83] Ibid., 21.
[84] Butler and Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation-State?*

the case for Chicano artistic production, where early proponents of Chicanismo argued that art was expected to reflect the social upheaval and resistance being experienced by Chicanos: 'We must insure that our writers, poets, musicians, and artists produce literature and art that is appealing to our people and relates to our revolutionary culture.'[85] In tracing the origins of Chicano art, artist Ester Hernandez points to the specific circumstances of the 1960s and 70s that shaped a collective response to social inequality:

> Chicano art has its roots in the history of the Chicano community. Dolores Huerta, Vice-President of the United Farm Workers, states that it was Chicano artists who made visible the lives of the Chicano community – from rural life to the urban centers. The social and political events of the early Chicano movement in the 1960s and 70s gave artists of Mexican ancestry their first Chicano-related subject matter and audience. Today, the struggle and issues (farmworker rights, immigration, school dropout rates, etc.) continue and intensify. Chicano art is being expressed in many ways (representational to abstract, traditional to experimental) and in many media to an ever-broadening audience. Chicano artists continue to give visual form to the hopes, dreams, fears, and aspirations of our community.[86]

This is a politicised, communal art; to be a Chicano artist is to consent to producing art that embraces and encourages the politics of the civil rights era that formed the Chicano Movement. Being a Chicano artist is inseparable from the political motivation out of which Chicanismo was born. Moraga's self-identification supports this idea of a nationalist-politicised art: 'I call myself a Chicana writer. Not a Mexican-American writer, not an Hispanic writer, not a half-breed writer. To be a Chicana is not merely to name one's racial/cultural identity, but also to name a politic, a politic that refuses assimilation into the U.S. mainstream' (*LG*, 56). Although César Chávez was reluctant to use the term 'Chicano', and did not use the name in relation to himself,[87] Dolores Huerta, his often-overlooked Vice-President, was more forthcoming in her recognition of Chicano art's ability to highlight social concerns, as

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[85] 'El Plan' in Valdez and Steiner, *Aztlan*, 405.
[86] Ester Hernandez in Richard Griswold del Castillo *et al*., *Chicano Art,* 18.
[87] Carlos Muñoz, Jr., *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (London, 1989), 7.

seen above. This is art that speaks directly to, and for, the struggles of a community, from the 1960s to the present day. Taking this one step further, Chicano art does not just give voice to a community but, as Judith Baca argues, 'Chicano art comes from the creation of community. In a society that does not affirm your culture or your experience Chicano art is making visible our own reality, a particular reality – by doing so we become an irritant to the mainstream vision.'[88]

With the goal to establish an aesthetic that distanced Chicano art from mainstream, Anglo American artistic production and criticism, there still remained the question of who the Chicano was, before he could further resist assimilation by aggravating and questioning traditional Western aesthetics, and write himself into subjecthood. Juan Bruce-Novoa's notion of 'the intercultural nothing' aptly conflates Chicano literature and subjectivity as a space, a site with malleable borders where the Chicano subject can at once explore and assert his autonomy. Bruce-Novoa argues that the influence of both Mexican and American cultures upon the Chicano is clear, '…yet we are neither, as we are not Mexican-American. I propose that we are the space (not the hyphen) between the two, the intercultural nothing of that space. We are continually expanding that space, pushing the two out and apart as we build our own separate reality….'[89] Bruce-Novoa's 'nothing' is not a negative entity but a *tabula rasa*, a surface whose inscription has been erased but, like a palimpsest, retains a trace of preceding cultural material.[90] It is perhaps this desire to inscribe a

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[88] Judith Baca in Richard Griswold del Castillo *et al*., *Chicano Art*, 21.

[89] Juan Bruce-Novoa in Paul Guajardo, *Chicano Controversy: Oscar Acosta and Richard Rodriguez* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 14.

[90] Daniel Cooper Alarcón describes a palimpsest as, 'a site where texts have been superimposed onto others in an attempt to displace earlier or competing histories. Significantly, such displacement is never total; the suppressed material often remains legible, however faintly, challenging the dominant text with an alternate version of events.' In this case, the Chicano challenges both Mexican and American discourses. Daniel Cooper Alarcón, *The Aztec Palimpsest: Mexico in the Modern Imagination* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1997), xiv.

communal identity in order to validate claims to cultural autonomy that has led to a tension between whether a Chicana/o artist speaks for or from a community.[91] This tension has in fact proved to be a great creative source for Chicana/o artists, as described by Rafael Pérez-Torres:

> The struggle in the late 1960s and 1970s with the very term "Chicano" – the desire to trace a line of descent from pre-Cortesian indigenous cultures, the belief in a return to origins and a homeland, the reclamation of voice and subjectivity – came to write some of us in and others of us out of a name. Where do the concerns of Chicanas fit? How is sexuality to be a part of our cultural identity? Although many of us are bilingual, many of us are solely English speakers; does language remain a marker of the Chicano/a? Besides gravitating toward a single language, more and more of us – especially the college-educated – move toward financial privilege. What role can the economically prosperous play within the terrain we demarcate "Chicano"?
>
> The power and dynamism of Chicano cultural creation manifests itself in the turns and shifts it takes in addressing these and other difficult issues.[92]

Chicana/os are heterogeneous, as Pérez-Torres and Chabram Dernersesian's split subjectivity demonstrate, and so Chicano art, whilst deriving from a nationalist struggle, is simultaneously confronted with the seeming immovability of nationalist constructs of the nation that paradoxically exclude citizens in the attempt to include the Chicano sub-nation[93] within the cultural discourse of the United States. This tension is perhaps most profoundly demonstrated through the motif of *la familia,* a nationalist construct that politically structures the public and private lives of Chicana/os.

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[91] Artist Isaac Julien has discussed this important differentiation in relation to his films, which he argues have been criticised by other black people for containing homosexual content that is seen as incongruent with black identity. In response, Julien contends that he cannot speak *for* a community, only from it. Q&A with Isaac Julien, Battersea Arts Centre, London, England, 2009.

[92] Rafael Pérez-Torres, *Movements in Chicano Poetry: Against Myths, Against Margins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2.

[93] It is worth clarifying the process of Chicano nationalism as a 'sub-nationalism' within the United States, in line with Benedict Anderson's definition: 'And many 'old nations,' once thought fully consolidated, find themselves challenged by 'sub'-nationalism within their borders – nationalisms which, naturally, dream of shedding this sub-ness one happy day.' Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 3.

'Nationally, we will represent one party, La Familia de La Raza.'[94] In this declaration of 'El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan', the conflation of political and domestic spheres is not illogical: nationalism aims to improve the daily lives of a suppressed people and this extends into private spheres, just as feminists have described the link between the private and the political. La familia, however, has proved problematic to the heterogeneity of Chicana/os, rejecting those who do not conform to its composition. As Catherine Ramírez has argued, 'For various cultural nationalists, the family – in particular the heteropatriarchal family – served as an appropriate, if not ideal, model for Chicano group identity…. [A]ctivists and scholars collapsed the community qua nation with the family.'[95] The family offered a sanctuary from the exploitation of the United States, a 'Chicano kinship system' that acted as 'a source of trust, refuge, and protection in a society that systematically exploits and oppresses Mexicans.'[96] 'The family, then,' argues Moraga, 'becomes all the more ardently protected by oppressed peoples, and the sanctity of this institution is infused like blood into the veins of the Chicano' (*LWY*, 101). As implied through El Plan's aspiration that the cultural values of the family will 'encourage the process of love and brotherhood,'[97] however, this kinship system involved a 'configuration of Chicano community as a fraternity or patriarchal, heteronormative family,'[98] excluding women, gay men and lesbians from Chicana/o political subjectivity and leadership.

[94] 'El Plan', Valdez and Steiner, *Aztlan*, 405.
[95] Catherine Ramírez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit*, 113.
[96] Maxine Baca Zinn in ibid.
[97] 'El Plan', 405.
[98] Ramírez, 114.

Oscar Zeta Acosta's *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* deftly underlines the connection between a politicised familia and its exclusion of women, in his portrayal of a protest against a church decision to ban Chicanos:

> It is Gloria Chavez, the fiery black-haired Chicano Militant. She charges down the aisle in a black satin dancing dress that shows her beautiful knockers and she carries a golf club in her pretty hands. I am aghast! The Faithful are petrified. No one makes a move for her. Her big zoftig ass shakes as she rushes up to the altar, turns to the pie-eyed man in the red cape, and shouts:
>
> ¡QUÉ VIVA LA RAZA!
>
> Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh! With three deft strokes Gloria clears off the Holy of Holies from the altar of red and gold. The little white house with its cross falls.[99]

It is aptly a woman who tears down the little white house that symbolises the interwoven patriarchal structures of Catholic Church and Chicano familial nation-state.[100] Set during the beginnings of the Chicano Movement, Acosta's semi-autobiographical protagonist, Buffalo Brown, is an invaluable depiction of a Mexican American man on the cusp of Chicanismo. As well as trying to decide who and what a Chicano is, Buffalo's narration depicts an objectification of women that highlights the difficulty with which they were acknowledged as subjects, let alone political actors. The heavy symbolism of Gloria's actions is almost lost in Buffalo's focus on her body, as though the female body is incompatible with the sphere of political activism. The detrimental effects of a conflation of patriarchal family and political structures upon Chicano nationalism was noted during the early days of the Chicano Movement by female activists such as Mirta Vidal, who argued that

> While it is true that the unity of La Raza is the basic foundation of the Chicano movement, when Chicano men talk about maintaining La Familia and the "cultural heritage" of La Raza, they are in fact talking about maintaining the age-old concept

[99] Oscar Zeta Acosta, *Revolt of the Cockroach People* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 18.
[100] 'Within Mexican/Chicano culture the authoritative model, however unconscious, to which fathers (masculine values) have recourse is the Catholic Holy Family and its assumed authority.' Norma Alarcón, 'Making Familia From Scratch: Split Subjectivities in the Work of Helena María Viramontes and Cherríe Moraga' in María Herrera-Sobek and Helena María Viramontes (Eds.), *Chicana Creativity and Criticism: Charting New Frontiers in American Literature* (Texas: Arte Publico Press, 1988), 149-150.

> of keeping the woman barefoot, pregnant, and in the kitchen. On the basis of the subordination of women there can be no real unity.[101]

This subordination of women is a political weakness of Chicanismo, 'our weakest link and softest spot,' according to Moraga, resulting from the misguided belief that 'the more severely we protect the sex roles within the family, the stronger we will be as a unit in opposition to the anglo threat' (*LWY*, 101). Moraga's resistance to the protection of patriarchal gender roles is undermined, however, through an inconsistency of form, which helpfully questions the efficacy of her nationalist-inflected politics that continues to delimit diversity through essentialised interpretations of identity.

An inconsistency of form

A fruitful element of Moraga's political output is her formal utilisation of contradiction. This enactment of contradiction through form is sometimes unmistakable, as with Moraga's simultaneous use of various languages, and at other times subtle, or arguably subconscious, where truth is tangible within fiction, creating a coexistence of truth and falsity. These varying formulations of contradiction initiate a dialogue between 'truths' and their alleged negations, as well as between text and audience, that demonstrates the utility of inconsistency by foregrounding the relational properties previously rejected by Aristotle's LNC. This dialogue also inadvertently uncovers further contradictions within Moraga's writing that test the efficacy of her politics.

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[101] Mirta Vidal, 'Women: New Voice of La Raza' in *Chicanas Speak Out* [Pamphlet comprised of Mirta Vidal, 'Women: New Voice of La Raza'; Elma Barrera, 'Statement'; 'Workshop Resolutions – First National Chicana Conference'], (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971), 8.

In light of Moraga's anti-colonial stance, the political value of Moraga's use of Spanish is often generated through its contradictory positioning alongside English. As Moraga explains in *Waiting in the Wings*, 'I do not distinguish Spanish from English with a different typeface. This more closely reflects the fluid bilinguality of the Chicana/o voice' (*WW*, 9). In this formulation, bilingualism is subjectivity, where the truth-establishing negation of Aristotle's LNC is inadequate, if not impossible, for the Chicano whose cultural identity draws upon a history of being both oppressor and oppressed: in Moraga's nationalist formulation of Chicanos constituting a 'nation within a nation' (*LG*, 54), the Spanish-English bilingualism of many Mexican Americans reflects a people whose historical protagonists include both Spanish conquistadores and Anglo colonialists. Furthermore, Moraga's use of Caló[102] and Nahuatl acknowledges an indigenous ancestry that predates Anglo and Iberian settlers and brings together all three linguistic strands. Excluding one or more of these languages as a negation of the contemporary centrality of English in the United States, overlooks the pluralized culturally reflective language used by Chicanos today, and the relations between indigenous, Iberian and Anglo presences on the American continent. In Chapter Two, Moraga draws our attention to ongoing attempts to enforce the centrality of English in the United States, which are based upon the oppressive dynamic of non-contradiction that establishes significance through exclusion. As well as such obvious instances of formal contradiction through a use of multilingualism, arguably an example of the very intersectional space denied by Aristotle's LNC, Moraga's work also displays examples of form where unintended

[102] Caló is a patois that combines Spanish, English and African American slang, and is associated with the urban Zoot Suit or 'Pachuco' era of the 1940s. See Manuel G. Gonzales, *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 166. See also Joyce Penfield and Jacob L. Ornstein-Galicia, *Chicano English: An Ethnic Contact Dialect* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamin's Publishing Company, 1985).

contradictions arise that nonetheless engender a helpful intersectional space between inconsistencies.

Although Moraga foregrounds a Chicano 'nation within a nation', this is not and in many ways cannot be a homeland separate from the United States, just as the bilingualism she supports cannot be entirely distinguished from the spectrum between oppressor and oppressed that her linguistic strategy alludes to.[103] The separatism of Moraga's nationalism understandably stems from an attempt to redress the political and cultural oppression of Chicanos in the United States, but it overlooks the relational qualities between Chicano cultural practice and Anglo American cultural practice, which is evident in the literary forms utilised by the writer. While Moraga highlights distinct cultural elements of Chicano identity through her use of Spanish, for example, she simultaneously uses English, and is employed by an institution of the type arguably responsible for promoting and maintaining a predominantly Anglo American canon (Moraga is Artist-in-residence at Stanford University's Drama department). And whilst Moraga interrogates Western cultural hegemony, the forms she uses to do this, such as the essay and the short story, are common to the Western literary tradition. This is not to argue that a writer can only take an anti-colonial stance by disregarding the prevalent literary forms of colonial powers, but that in her attempt to distinguish Chicano cultural practice from A[104]nglo American traditions, Moraga, like Aristotle's LNC, overlooks relations and commonalities in favour of depicting seemingly free-standing, singular 'truths'. Like the oppressive practices of colonialism that eradicate indigenous traditions, this attempted singularity risks creating a cultural vacuum where history is elided. The impossibility of this formal

[103] Although Moraga's depiction of marginalised Chicanos is arguably an attempt to demonstrate a forced separation rather than a desired one.

singularity is further evidence of the shortsightedness of Aristotle's LNC which does not (and perhaps could not) have accounted for the cultural intersections that would increase through the passing of history, although as we will see in Chapter Five, Athenians were adept at utilising cultural forms to control the threat to their superiority posed by foreign peoples. Alongside the formal combination of Chicano and Western cultural forms that highlights the survival of Chicano subjectivity in the face of Anglo American hegemony, formal relations elsewhere in Moraga's work belie the continuing existence of negative cultural ties. These links are appropriately exposed through Moraga's contradictory use of fiction as truth-maker, which challenges constructions of knowledge by making us re-evaluate the status of negation.

'…[T]his writing is my own personal "fiction" (*WW*, 9),' says Moraga of her memoir, *Waiting in the Wings*, underscoring the contradictory methodology that intertwines seemingly oppositional forms of fact and fiction. In the short story 'Pesadilla', this contradiction of form creates a dynamic between text, reader and other authors that offers suggestions for some of the causes of Moraga's political inconsistencies around race and women of colour feminist coalitions. Just as it might be argued that autobiographical accounts are to an extent fictional due to the editorial choices that determine the inclusion and exclusion of events and due to the interpretation resulting from retrospection, both of which create a narrative that is not precisely historical, it may also be possible that fiction can act as a conduit for truth, being sufficiently removed from real-life events to generate a safe location where difficult circumstances and self-critiques can be expressed, in the case of 'Pesadilla', around internalised oppression and its effects within women of colour coalitions. The temporal distance that aids autobiographical interpretation is not dissimilar to the

formal distance that facilitates a fictional exploration of real-life events, where fiction protectively masks the potential shame of factual recognition: in both instances, truth and fiction are enmeshed, demonstrating their potential coexistence rather than prescribed opposition. This relationship destabilises Aristotle's construction of truth, positing instead that falsity, rather than being a negation of singular truth, can also play a role in constructing knowledge. With this relational rather than oppositional connection demonstrating the agency of falsity, we must reassess the exclusion that is associated with negation, which has great implications for oppressed peoples experiencing the effects of discrimination masquerading as paternalistic 'knowledge' imbued with value at the necessary expense of excluded alternative philosophies. It is in this anti-colonial vein that Moraga's contradictory commingling of truth and fiction offers a helpful political function, encouraging the reader to question dominant 'truths' about acceptable constructions of identity that have resulted in destructive psychological manifestations such as internalised oppression. Let us begin, however, by addressing Moraga's treatment of macro-level, national identity politics involving language, which presages the writer's internalisation of value-laden notions of singularity.

Chapter Two

Postcolonial perceptions of language: internal colonisation for whom?

Definitions of nationalism vary according to the discourse of the moment.
Roberta Fernández[1]

The best way of being right in the future is, in certain periods, to know how to resign oneself to being out of fashion.
Ernest Renan[2]

In the attempt to contribute to the notion of heterogeneous Chicana subjectivity, Moraga demands the continuance of Spanish-English bilingualism amid national debates that would result in the abolition of bilingual education in her home state of California. This chapter will argue that Moraga's defence of Spanish as an important marker of ethnicity is problematised by a singular promotion of the language that reduces what should be a debate around multilingualism, to one of bilingualism, betraying an entrenched political framework of binaristic Aristotelian non-contradiction that limits the dialogic potential of political debate. This chapter will contextualise the cultural politics of Chicano nationalism that influence Moraga's configuration of Spanish as an anti-colonial tool of resistance. I will then explore Moraga's articulation of Spanish as a 'mother tongue', whereby Moraga's Chicana lesbian subjectivity is intricately tied to the cultural heritage of her mother. This articulation is troubled, I will argue, by Moraga's essentialisation of language as 'proof' of identity, which belies the way in which culture is learned, as evidenced

[1] Roberta Fernández, 'Abriendo caminos in the Brotherland: Chicana Writers Respond to the Ideology of Literary Nationalism', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, Vol. 14, No.2, (1994), 24.
[2] Ernest Renan, 'What is a Nation?', in Homi K. Bhabha (Ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 21.

through Moraga's own acquisition of Spanish. Using Rosi Braidotti's notion of nomadic subjects, I will demonstrate that Moraga's essentialisation of language embeds the binary framework that prevents the nomad's fluidity and movement. Finally, this chapter will argue that although it might be argued that attempts to abolish bilingual education display elements of 'neo-colonialism' through contentious 'English-only' campaigns, Moraga's adherence to this polarised, Spanish-English articulation of language politics maintains a framework of non-contradiction that excludes the very indigenous peoples with whom she claims political allegiance.

Diana Taylor's assessment of the markedly different ways in which Spanish is regarded across the American continent highlights a central contradiction within Moraga's political approach to language:

> Spanish, for many Latino/as, is the language of resistance. It is the language of the community and of the home. While U.S. Latino writers often try to hold on to or recuperate Spanish as a "native tongue," in the words of Gloria Anzaldúa, for many groups in Latin America Spanish has been and continues to be the colonial language.[3]

Moraga utilises Spanish as a tool of resistance against Anglo-centrism in the United States, in her identity politics that are influenced by Chicano nationalism's utilisation of Mexican American heritage. As Taylor notes, however, certain Latin American groups also regard Spanish as a colonial language, especially in relation to the erasure of indigenous languages and cultures. This chapter will demonstrate that while Moraga manages to linguistically demonstrate the connection between personal and political spheres, through her allusions to national debates around bilingualism in schools and individual experiences of Spanish, the inconsistency arising from Spanish as a language of both oppressor and oppressed, helpfully demonstrates that the over-

[3] Diana Taylor, 'Opening Remarks' in Diana Taylor and Juan Villegas (Eds.), *Negotiating Performance: Gender, Sexuality, and Theatricality in Latin/o America* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994), 6.

reliance of Moraga's identity politics upon a nationalist framework undermines the very indigenous people she claims a political allegiance with.

One of Moraga's clearest articulations of her nationalist politics is outlined in the essay 'Queer Aztlán', from *The Last Generation*. Following an assessment of this essay as a blueprint for Moraga's nationalist language politics, I will trace the development of Spanish as a tool of resistance in Moraga's work, both linguistically and thematically, culminating in an analysis of the socio-political environment that has led Moraga to argue for the importance of Spanish. Regarded as a language under threat within its own nation due to efforts to prohibit bilingual education, it may be appropriate to utilise theories of 'internal colonisation' when examining Moraga's defence of Spanish. Moraga's use of such models to further an anti-colonial agenda, however, is interrogated through a consideration of the arising contradiction: the lack of indigenous languages in Moraga's arguments paradoxically fortifies a connection between her own rhetoric and that of groups promoting English-only education, whereby both steadfastly promote a linguistic singularity through which national identity is symbolised. Furthermore, Moraga's singularity also overlooks the heterogeneity of Spanish, a language that is used by different peoples and with varying connotations. In the inability to formulate language politics with similarly affected groups, Moraga's Chicano focus unintentionally promotes a logic of linguistic assimilation that is not far removed from the exclusionary melting pot she decries.

The language of nationalism in 'Queer Aztlán'

Moraga's essay, 'Queer Aztlán', is published in *The Last Generation* and offers an outline of the writer's allegiance to nationalism as an anti-colonial strategy. 'The state

of colonialism is, of course, not "post" at all; but appears throughout the globe and our neighbourhoods in ever inventive new ("neo") formations' (*LWY*, note 16, 222). For Moraga, colonialism is not just an historical entity, a thing of the past – colonialism is very much alive today, through processes of globalisation as well as through developments within the United States that affect its own citizens. In response to this perceived subjugation, Moraga proposes a unique project, a 'Queer Aztlán' intended to empower the Chicana/o community, both as a collective and as individuals within this collective. For all of its innovation, Queer Aztlán is 'essentially' a nationalist project. Curiously, in its arguments for nation formation, Queer Aztlán does not explicitly highlight language use in its utopian theorisations. It is obvious, however, from Moraga's body of work and from any thorough consideration of nationalism, that language use and nation formation are intertwined. Following an exploration of Queer Aztlán's nationalist proposals, we will look at why language should be incorporated into such a discourse, and what Moraga's language use suggests for the socio-political environment she wishes to affect. I will demonstrate that Moraga's project demonstrates a tension between theory and its implications in the 'real world', a theme explored by Rosa Braidotti's 'nomadic subject', which results from the inability to account for the contradiction that, in this case, one can simultaneously enact the roles of oppressor and oppressed.

Cherríe Moraga opens her essay, 'Queer Aztlán: the Re-formation of Chicano Tribe', with an epigraph from poet Ricardo Bracho: 'How will our lands be free if our bodies aren't?' (*LG*, 145). It is no accident that Moraga chooses this quote relating land and body. Later in the essay, with regard to colonisation, Moraga says that, '…it is historically evident that the female body, like the Chicano people, has been colonized.

And any movement to decolonize them must be culturally and sexually specific' (*LG*, 149). In its entirety, the decolonizing, nation-forming impetus of Queer Aztlán is a response to this colonization of both land and body. For Moraga, it is the lesbian body within the Chicano community specifically that must be freed. And it is the recognition of this body that accounts for her politicization:

> My real politicization began, not through the Chicano Movement, but through the bold recognition of my lesbianism. Coming to terms with that fact meant the radical re-structuring of everything I thought I held sacred. It meant acting on my woman-centered desire and against anything that stood in its way, including my Church, my family, and my "country." It meant acting in spite of the fact that I had learned from my Mexican culture and the dominant culture that my womanhood was, if not despised, certainly deficient and hardly worth the loving of another woman in bed. But act I did, because not acting would have meant my death by despair. (*LG*, 146)

Moraga's struggles as a Chicana lesbian cannot be equated to those of non-Chicana lesbians, indeed, perhaps not even to other Chicana lesbians. The elucidations propounded in 'Queer Aztlán' enact a discourse on the varying struggles one has to go through in order to be a Chicano, struggles dependent on individual experiences. It is this individuality of experience, and how these struggles are defined by Chicanos, that Moraga proposes as the subject of her essay (*LG*, 147). To help her articulate the diversity of these struggles, Moraga utilises the most potent symbol from the Chicano movement: Aztlán.

As both symbol and myth, Luis Leal argues that Aztlán forwarded the claims of the Chicano movement by presenting a stable yet transferable site:

> …as a myth, it symbolized the existence of a paradisiacal region where injustice, evil, sickness, old age, poverty, and misery do not exist […] and more important, Aztlán symbolized the spiritual union of the Chicanos, something that is carried within the heart, no matter where they may live or where they may find themselves.[4]

[4] Luis Leal, 'In Search of Aztlán', in Rudolfo Anaya and Francisco Lomeli (Eds.), *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 8.

Nothing the critics of Chicano cultural nationalists have done, argues J. Jorge Klor de Alva, 'has managed to surpass or equal [Aztlán as a] feat of organizational strategy.'[5] Nowhere is this clearer than in Moraga's continued use of Aztlán generations later.

Although Moraga's dissatisfaction with the homophobic and patriarchal status quo of both Mexican and hegemonic Anglo American cultures is clear from her lesbian-focused politicization, there is still a desire to be part of a Chicana/o collective. Ten years after Moraga's initial, inexpressible desire to be part of the Chicano Movement of the 1960s, she is finally able 'to bring all the parts of me – Chicana, lesbian, half-breed, and poeta – to the revolution, wherever it was' (*LG*, 146). This bringing together of all parts is a revolution in itself but, as Moraga suggests, it is a conglomeration that enables other uprisings to be fought and in queer Aztlán, the rebellion takes on a distinctly nationalist tone.

This collective is at once a population and a place, indeed a nation, or homeland, where the various differences of individuals are recognised and as such, afforded value, a value that empowers a range of self-identifications. It was with Bracho that Moraga came to define Queer Aztlán, which remains both a location and a proposition:

> We discussed the limitations of "Queer Nation," whose leather-jacketed, shaved-headed white radicals and accompanying anglo-centricity were an "alien-nation" to most lesbians and gay men of color. We also spoke of Chicano Nationalism, which never accepted openly gay men and lesbians among its ranks. Ricardo half-jokingly concluded, "What we need, Cherríe, is a 'Queer Aztlán.'" Of course. A Chicano homeland that could embrace *all* its people, including its jotería. (*LG*, 147)[6]

Queer Aztlán reverberates with the 'paradisiacal' inferences of Leal's description of the homeland. Although queer Aztlán attempts to include people neglected by the Chicano movement of the 1960s, in its processes it is not far removed from the

[5] J. Jorge Klor de Alva, 'Aztlán, Borinquen and Hispanic Nationalism' in Anaya and Lomeli, 149.
[6] Moraga defines jotería as a 'Chicano term for "queer" folk' on the same page.

nationalism of the same era. In fact, Moraga denies claims that the Chicano Movement is dead, that it lasted from the late 1960s and died out throughout the next generation. For Moraga, '"El Movimiento" has never been a thing of the past, it has retreated into subterranean uncontaminated soils awaiting resurrection in a "queerer," more feminist generation' (*LG*, 148). Moraga recognises the dangers of nationalism, 'Its tendency towards separatism can run dangerously close to biological determinism and a kind of fascism' (*LG*, 149), but she is nonetheless determined to work through the failures of the Chicano Movement whilst maintaining its successes, '…its commitment to preserving the integrity of the Chicano people…. [T]o develop Chicano consciousness, autonomy, and self-determination' (*LG*, 148). And Moraga is clear that these developments will be carried out through the creation of a *nation*:

> The nationalism I seek is one that decolonizes the brown and female body as it decolonizes the brown and female earth. It is a new nationalism in which la Chicana Indígena stands at the center, and heterosexism and homophobia are no longer the cultural order of the day. I cling to the word "nation" because without the specific naming of the nation, the nation will be lost (as when feminism is reduced to humanism, the woman is subsumed). Let us retain our radical naming but expand it to meet a broader and wiser revolution. (*LG*, 150)

In light of Moraga's Mexican heritage it is understandable yet intriguing that 'la Chicana Indígena' is named in Spanish. It is also troubling that Moraga's 'broader and wiser revolution' merely substitutes one centre for another, placing an idealised indigenous woman at the centre. As Kaplan, Alarcón and Moallem argue, 'Viewing the world as constituted only through margins and centers … leaves us within the discursive cosmos of colonial power relations.'[7] (We will return to the indigenous woman in Chapter Five.) But it is important to recognise the relationship between nation-based theory and colonialism:

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[7] From the introduction to Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcón and Minoo Moallem (Eds.), *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms, Transnational Feminisms, and the State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 4.

> Despite the wide range of specific approaches, nation-based theory is fundamentally rooted in the dynamics of colonialism.… Although in a state of disarray and breakdown today, the legacy of the colonial order remains in a variety of forms, extending from the position of international frontiers drawn in much of the colonized world by the ruling powers to the existence of spheres of influence descended from systems of colonial rule, and indeed to the very contours of the international division of labor, based on unequal exchange and the domination of the "periphery" by the "core." In the nation-based paradigm, racial dynamics are understood as products of colonialism and, therefore, as outcomes of relationships which are global and epochal in character.[8]

Moraga unapologetically proposes a nationalist framework for the project of decolonizing Chican*a*s. It is important to note that although this strategy may appear to perpetuate a gendered split amongst Chicanas/os, Moraga's agenda, like that of other Chicanas, is not only to highlight the oppression of Mexican American women, but to redress this imbalance in the hope that it will strengthen the movement as a whole. As Angie Chabram-Dernersesian argued, the 'cultural authenticity and independent self-affirmation' denied Chicanas within the Chicano Movement were the very elements that were central to the movement's goals to redress the lack of self-representation afforded to Mexican Americans for generations.[9] As Moraga says, above, she wishes to create a homeland that will 'embrace *all* its people,' and her essay is admittedly about the various ways in which Chicanos define the struggle towards 'a sense of place among la Chicanada' (*LG*, 147).

The indigenous element to this nationalism, however, is embedded in a very Spanish framework, as is Moraga's reminiscence of the first time she heard *Aztlán*, a word she recognizes as deriving from Náhuatl (*LG*, 151)[10]:

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[8] Michael Omi and Harold Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 39.
[9] Angie Chabram-Dernersesian quoted in Naomi H. Quiñonez, 'Re(riting) the Chicana Postcolonial: From Traitor to 21st Century Interpreter', in Arturo J. Aldama and Naomi H. Quiñonez (Eds.), *Decolonial Voices: Chicana and Chicano Cultural Studies in the 21st Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 136.
[10] Classical Nahuatl is the Uto-Aztecan language used by indigenous groups inhabiting the Mexican plateau at the time of Cortez's invasion. George Watson, 'Nahuatl Words in American English', *American Speech*, Vol. 13, No.2 (Apr., 1938), 108 and Barbara Stiebels,

> *Aztlán*. I don't remember when I first heard the word, but I remember it took my heart by surprise to learn of that place – that "sacred landscape" wholly evident en las playas, los llanos, y en las montañas of the North American Southwest. A terrain that I did not completely comprehend at first, but that I continue to try, in my own small way, to fully inhabit and make habitable for its Chicano citizens. (*LG*, 150)

This habitation, as we can see from Moraga's choice of language to describe the landscape of Aztlán, is identified in a distinctly Spanish manner. Just as Moraga drives past the word Aztlán etched onto the face of a mountainside in the Southwest (*LG*, 151), she, too, inscribes an identity onto the landscape by describing it in Spanish. This, and the above quote, points to the complexity of the Chicana/o identity, steeped as it is in both Spanish colonial and indigenous histories. The historic specificity of the *mestiza* is elaborated upon perhaps most eloquently and exhaustively in Gloria Anzaldúa's conception of a 'new Mestiza':

> In a constant state of mental nepantilism, an Aztec word meaning torn between ways, la mestiza is a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another. Being tricultural, monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, speaking a patois, and in a state of perpetual transition, the *mestiza* faces the dilemma of the mixed breed: which collectivity does the daughter of a darkskinned mother listen to?[11]

Moraga's writing embodies this struggle, and the Spanish she uses acknowledges her Mexican ancestry. Moraga names not only the land but her sovereignty, too, in Spanish: '…the sovereign right to wholly inhabit oneself (*cuerpo y alma*) and one's territory (*pan y tierra*) (*LG*, 173-4). What is of concern is the way in which this conception of a complex identity is politically fixed in Moraga's writing as a nationalist endeavour, overlooking the potential of the mestiza's 'state of perpetual transition' that resists fixity, by foregrounding Spanish, a language that also has colonial connotations. An outline of Moraga's use of Spanish, including biographical

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'Noun-Verb Symmetries in Nahuatl Nominalizations', *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, Vol. 17, No.4 (Nov., 1999), 783.

[11] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/*La Frontera*: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: aunt lute books, 2007), 100.

details that help to explain elements of the development of Spanish throughout Moraga's work, will illuminate this centralisation of Spanish.

Language as resistance: Cherríe Moraga's Spanish

The use of Spanish is paramount to Cherríe Moraga's writing and to her identity. 'Increasingly,' she argues, 'the struggles on this planet are not for "nation-states," but for nations of people, bound together by spirit, land, language, history, and blood' (*LG*, 168-169). This is the only time Moraga explicitly connects language and nation in her essay, 'Queer Aztlán.' In Moraga's writing, the importance of language choice is evoked in biographical detail as well as through theory and form, but this importance is connected to Spanish, not the indigenous idyll that fuels Moraga's nationalist project. Before exploring the Spanish-English dichotomy that fuels Moraga's 'new nationalism' (*LG*, 150), it is necessary to outline Moraga's depiction of Spanish in order to understand how and why it has become a focus of her writing.

'I am so afraid,' Moraga writes, 'my mind conjures many images in the vain attempt to secure the parameters of "self" – delusions of my importance and conversely my own pitifulness. And language language language, which codifies raw being' (*LWY*, 197-198). This codification of 'raw being' involves, as the repeated word suggests, a varied use of language that in its enactment, codifies an identity. Moraga frequently writes in Spanish, often without translating into English. Her poem 'War Cry', for example, is, apart from the title, entirely in Spanish with no English translation (*LG*, 42). At other times, Spanish and English are used in the same sentence or verse:

> She refuses
> bites her lip
> to repel
> el deseo
> que quiere

estallar
por la boca (*LG*, 43)

Naomi Quiñonez argues that for first wave Chicana writers, this untranslated Spanish works to inscribe a difference:

> Postcolonial writers sometimes choose their language(s) based on the need to preserve an authentic sense of meaning regardless of whether it can be understood by "others." For a people who have suffered the loss of language through colonization, this clearly becomes a political act of reclamation. After a period of serving the linguistic and thematic ideas of Anglos, first wave Chicana writers reclaim their language, which may force the dominant English speaker into the role of "other."[12]

The difference described by Quiñonez displays itself in Moraga's writing in the legacy of colonisation(s) that has manifested itself in a hierarchy between English and Spanish. For the non-Spanish-speaking reader, approaching Moraga's writing often entails a collision, bumping up against barriers of language that cannot be understood by the Anglo reader. (I say 'Anglo' here because it is this specific subject/reader that Moraga's writing often, but not always, finds itself in dialogue with. There are, of course, Anglo Americans who speak Spanish.) The writing at times does not want itself to be understood by Anglo readers. This inability to understand and make sense out of a text in a foreign tongue helps to shift the balance in power that favours English in the United States. In *An Other Tongue*, Alfred Arteaga argues that articulations of language participate in the struggle to define a 'self' in the face of an 'other'.[13] Arteaga goes on to argue that within this hierarchy between European languages, Spanish in the Americas has come to be depicted as a 'Third World language' as English has become the language of power:

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[12] Naomi H. Quiñonez, 'Re(riting) the Chicana Postcolonial: From Traitor to 21st Century Interpreter' in Arturo J. Aldama and Naomi H. Quiñonez (Eds.), *Decolonial Voices: Chicana and Chicano Cultural Studies in the 21st Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 143.
[13] Alfred Arteaga (Ed.), *An Other Tongue: Nation and Ethnicity in the Linguistic Borderlands* (Duke University Press: Durham and London, 1994), 1.

> In poem and in daily speech, English and Spanish bestow different levels of authority on text and speaker…. English carries with it the status of authorization by the hegemony. It is the language of Anglo America and of linguistic Anglo Americans, whether or not they be ethnic Anglos. Further, it is the language of the greatest military and economic power in the world. Spanish is a language of Latin Americans, south of the border and north. Across the border, Spanish is a Third World language; here it is the language of the poor…. For we have been trained to know that, despite the fact that we make up perhaps one in four in the state, what Mexicans, Chicanos, and Latinos say and do in our language is not worthy of print.[14]

In an interview with Moraga, we discussed language and her attempts to secure bilingual education for her son in California. Mirroring Arteaga's connection between language and class in the United States, it transpired that access to bilingual education was only possible for families earning a low wage (or less), leading Moraga to conclude that the only way to remember being Latino is being poor.[15] Writing in Spanish is, for Moraga, a similar reclamation of language that addresses a history of colonisation *and* the legacy of this colonisation that manifests itself in contemporary disparities between the two languages. To write only in English would be to deny Moraga's and North America's Mexican heritage. Writing in Spanish is a way of redressing the language's reputation as being unworthy of print, and of decolonising the page: 'When we write in translation, we never move beyond our colonized status' (*LWY*, 148). But Moraga's use of Spanish is even more complicated than this. Moraga's biographical writing demonstrates that her writing not only attempts to reinstate Spanish, but also, for this writer, to learn Spanish.

In 'La Güera', we find out that Moraga did not learn Spanish at home. Instead, Moraga picked up what little Spanish she learned as a teenager, at school and through overheard conversations between her mother and relatives (*LWY*, 43). With the intention of giving her children the best possible advantages in the United States, Moraga's mother, a Mexican immigrant, encouraged the Anglicization of her

[14] Alfred Arteaga, 'An Other Tongue', in ibid., 12.
[15] Interview with Moraga, August 2009.

children: 'the more effectively we could pass in the white world, the better guaranteed our future' (*LWY*, 43). Years later, however, there is an indescribable absence, a longing, that only Spanish seems able to assuage:

> Quiero decir que I know on the surface of things, this may not make sense. I spoke English at home. On the surface of things I am not supposed to feel that my language has been stripped away from me…. But there is something else, deep and behind my heart that I want to hold hot and bold in the hands of my writing, in the circle of my mouth, and it will not come out sounding like English. Te prometo. No es inglés. (*LWY*, 132)

Moraga recognises the criticism she faces in arguing from the vantage point of a college English-educated citizen of the United States, that Spanish was stolen from her (*LWY*, 132). This criticism does not alter Moraga's sense that something is felt to be missing from the English articulations she has been taught to use. In the immediate dynamics of the Moraga family, we can see real and symbolic relationships and separations in operation that illuminate Moraga's linguistic dilemma and beg for a greater consideration of the role Spanish plays in the United States.

Moraga is the fair skinned subject of the essay, *la güera*, reminding us that her father is Anglo American. Moraga's father is an ethereal presence throughout her writing, rarely mentioned yet, I would argue, of great importance to Moraga's schema of language and nation. Moraga does not portray her father as a villain: he is a hardworking man, 'who sometimes worked as much as seventy hours a week to feed my face every day' (*LWY*, 82).[16] Although he provides for his family financially, Moraga's father is unable to give her what she needs emotionally: 'I saw that he couldn't love us – not in the way we so desperately needed' (*LWY*, 85). The meaning of this is not explicit, as Moraga does not clarify the kind of love she does need from

[16] Moraga has also referred to her father as 'a beautiful man.' Interview with Moraga, August 2009.

her father. In the lead up to this declaration, however, there is a telling moment that relates the deficiencies of her father to his white race.

While Moraga's mother is in hospital, relatives look after Moraga and her siblings, and her father remains in the family home by himself. Moraga's father visits her once during this time but, 'The strange thing was, I didn't really miss his visits, although I sometimes fantasized some imaginary father, dark and benevolent, who might come and remind us that we still were a family' (*LWY*, 84). This is a striking sentence whose physical description of the imaginary father links race and family. Moraga's conception of family is brown, not white. Although light-skinned like Moraga, she cannot identify with the privileges her brother has because, '…unlike him, I could never have become the white man, only the white man's woman…. My brother's sex was white. Mine, brown' (*LWY*, 84, 85). This microcosm of family life comes to stand for the societal status that Moraga lacks as a brown woman. There are limits to the advantages of Moraga's light skin as it does not address issues of gender. This realisation conflates racial and gender oppression. Through her subjugation as a woman, Moraga suggests, she begins to understand the oppressive effects of race and is consequently positioned as a brown woman. As a result, Moraga turns to the colour of her mother: 'I am a white girl gone brown to the blood color of my mother…' (*LWY*, 52). For Moraga, family is about gender, too, and the strength of family comes to lie with its Mexican females, its mothers. It is not his whiteness alone that makes Moraga's father inefficient, but the symbolic relationship of this whiteness to her burgeoning conception of family and culture. The Anglo father comes to symbolise a continuation of white culture depleting the Mexican from 'Mexican American.' In turn, the Mexican mother comes to symbolise for Moraga all that has been lost, including history, language and culture. Recognising the Mexican woman, 'returning'

to the Mexican woman through a focus on the 'mother tongue', becomes a way of addressing the peripheral positioning of women through a conflation of language, gender and sexuality. This conflation, however, becomes a delimiting one when considered in light of Moraga's nationalism.

Moraga states very clearly that her brand of feminism is intrinsically a personal one, addressing her specific experience as a Chicana lesbian (*LWY*, 130). Moraga's various strands of experience do not exist separately, however. In the intricacy of her writing, Moraga interweaves her sexuality, race and gender to forge an idea of nation, of home. In recognising her love for women, Moraga also refigures the gendered value system of patriarchy; women are *worth* loving. As a Chicana, this involves rectifying patriarchal dynamics that have perpetuated the myth of 'La Malinche', in order to enable Chicanas to love themselves as well as other women. '*Malintzín* […] has become known as *la Chingada* – the fucked one. She has become the bad word that passes a dozen times a day from the lips of Chicanos. Whore, prostitute, the woman who sold out her people to the Spaniards are epithets Chicanos spit out with contempt.'[17] Anzaldúa's description highlights the lack of sexual agency that has come to be associated with la Malinche. She is the 'fucked one'; she does not initiate desire, let alone act upon it, or enjoy it. Lesbian desire, on the other hand, refutes this notion of passivity:

> Lesbianism as a sexual act can never be construed as reproductive sex. It is not work. It is purely about pleasure and intimacy. How this refutes, spits in the face of, the notion of sex as reproductive, sex as duty! In stepping outside the confines of the institution of heterosexuality, I was indeed *choosing* sex freely. (*LWY*, 116)

Moraga simultaneously transgresses heterosexual norms and the myths of her Mexican American culture that maintain notions of passive women. There is a great

[17] Anzaldúa, 44.

deal of fear in Moraga's identification of her sexuality, of 'returning' to women, which, as with her return to Spanish, is tinged with feelings of shame:

> Returning to la mujer scares me, re-learning Spanish scares me. I have not spoken much of la lengua here, possibly because my mutedness in Spanish still shames me. In returning to the love of my raza, I must confront the fact that not only has the mother been taken from me, but her tongue, my mother-tongue. I yearn for the language, feel my own tongue rise to the occasion of feeling at home, in common with other Latinas … and then suddenly it escapes me. The traitor-voice within me chastises, "¡Quítate de aquí¡ you don't belong!" (*LWY*, 131)

It is this sense of belonging, of finding a home, that Moraga addresses through her intertwined explorations of language and sexuality. In an expanded second edition of *Loving in the War Years*, Moraga writes about leaving her white lover of eight years for a Chicana, and how the breakdown of this relationship was affected by her discovery, in the above passage and elsewhere, that she not only desired a return to women, but that 'that return to women required a return to my people (Chicano/mexicano/indio) as well…' (*LWY*, 203-204). (The problematics of enacting a racialised 'return' to an indigenous female heritage will be explored in the final chapter.) Spanish is key to this return, as it fosters a perceived independence from Anglo American ideology and the ability 'to speak of Return to one's people without our tongues tied by amerikanisms…' (*LWY*, 204). Moraga cannot separate her sexuality from her language and conceptions of nation. This becomes conflated in what Moraga calls her 'basic sexual nationalism' (*LWY*, 202-203). As we see in Rosi Braidotti's assessment of the notion of 'mother tongue', however, Moraga's configuration of language and nationalism is not as progressive as it might seem.

'…[T]he concept of the mother tongue,' argues Rosi Braidotti, 'is stronger than ever. It feeds into the renewed and exacerbated sense of nationalism, regionalism, localism, which marks this particular moment of our history. It repeats

everything nomadic subjects reject.'[18] Originally published in the same decade as Moraga's *Last Generation*, Braidotti's idea of a 'nomadic subject', like Anzaldúa's *mestiza*, resists the fixedness of notions such as authenticity that essentialise ideologies such as nationalism. Unlike Moraga's use of Spanish to create an almost biological connection to the Mexican heritage of her mother, Braidotti's nomadic subject is concerned with transformative qualities that eschew binary oppositions:

> The point of nomadic subjectivity is to identify lines of flight, that is to say, a creative alternative space of becoming that would fall not between the mobile/immobile, the resident/the foreigner distinction, but within all these categories. The point is neither to dismiss nor to glorify the status of marginal, alien others, but to find a more accurate, complex location for a transformation of the very terms of their specification and of our political interaction.[19]

I do not take issue with Moraga's learning of Spanish, but I do question her focus on the supposed intrinsic quality of the language as proof of identity. Moraga's concentration on Spanish as a pre-ordained, underlying ethnic marker as opposed to an acquired language in her case, demonstrates a dismissal of the central concern of the nomadic subject, which is '…that there is a noticeable gap between how we live […] and how we represent to ourselves this lived existence in theoretical terms and discourses.'[20] The ability to learn, or choose aspects of identity, is one of the ways in which humanity maintains its heterogeneity. It is also proof that identity is not fixed, and has at times been enforced upon us, and if we can learn identity, we can also unlearn the negative identifiers that have been used to marginalise people. Moraga's dismissal of the shifting and transformative nomadic subject, which she paradoxically enacts through learning Spanish but overlooks in her essentialisation of the language, undermines her attempts at social justice for Chicanas by promoting a nationalist

[18] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: embodiment and sexual difference in contemporary feminist theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 43.
[19] Ibid., 7.
[20] Ibid., 4.

approach that linguistically separates, rather than unites, Chicanas. Regardless of the many languages Latinas speak, Moraga insists upon the exclusionary singular, 'yearn[ing] for the language […] in common with other Latinas.' Moraga's insistence upon non-contradiction, upon an oppositional relationship between Spanish and English, is better understood, however, if we consider the historical, imperial connection signified by the two languages in the United States, from which Chicano nationalism derives its agenda.

Gloria Anzaldúa notes that, '…*es difícil* differentiating between *lo heredado, lo adquirido, lo impuesto*.[21] It is in the failure to recognise this differentiation that Moraga's Queer Aztlán puts itself at risk of promoting a nationalism that repeats the mechanisms of colonialism. As connected as Moraga is to the 'Mexican Indio', and as vehemently opposed as she is to the 'Anglo-centric, patriarchal, imperialist United States' (*LG*, 173), it is curious that Moraga retains the language of European Spanish colonialism. There is, however, in one of Moraga's plays, a defining moment that pits English against Spanish, contextualising the shift in focus away from indigeneity and toward a battle between colonial powers. In a horrifying scene, *Giving Up the Ghost's* Corky, the teenage embodiment of Marisa, describes being raped when she was twelve years old. Scholars such as Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano have written about this scene in relation to Moraga's imagery that equates, often through the myth of *La Malinche*, the vagina and the mouth, and the ways in which the Mexican female and lesbian voice/body has been silenced and relegated to an arena of passivity.[22] It is also possible, however, to view this scene in light of the violence inflicted through

[21] *The inherited, the acquired, the imposed*. Anzaldúa, 104.
[22] Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*, 132-33. See also '(De)constructing the Lesbian Body' in Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, *The Wounded Heart: Writing on Cherríe Moraga* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001).

language. Corky is drawn into a classroom to help 'this man a mexicano'[23] who is trying to fix a teacher's desk. Corky notices the man's accent, '…his Spanish I couldn't quite make it out cuz he mumbled a lot / which made me feel kina bad about myself tú sabes / that I was Mexican too but couldn't understand him that good' (*GUG*, 26). In the build up to the rape, the man continues to speak in Spanish, drawing Corky into an increasingly vulnerable position. Suddenly, the threat of violence becomes clear, and the rapist's language switches to English: ' "Don't move," he tells me. In English. His accent gone. 'n' I don'' (*GUG*, 27). The violence of this scene, I would argue, is compounded even further by the shock of linguistic transference from Spanish to English. The balance of power is shifted so that a hierarchy is created in this case, through language. Spanish becomes subjugated by English. The dialogue of Moraga's nationalism hence becomes one between two European languages. It is this shift in power that dictates Moraga's Chicano nation:

> Chicano Nation is a mestizo nation conceived in a double-rape: first, by the Spanish and then by the Gringo. In the mid-19th century, Anglo-America took possession of one-third of México's territory. A new English-speaking oppressor assumed control over the Spanish, Mestizo, and Indian people inhabiting those lands. There was no denying that the United States had stolen Aztlán from México, but it had been initially stolen from the Indians by the Spanish some 300 years earlier. (*LG*, 153-4)

Although acknowledged, the indigenous subject is relegated to the bottom rung of society through language choice, or rather through the absence of a choice, just as Moraga admits was the case during the Spanish colonial era of the Americas. Discourse turns to the particular relationship between English and Spanish. They both remain, however, colonial languages. For the indigenous elements evoked throughout Moraga's nationalism, it is possible that Spanish remains *lo impuesto* rather than *lo acquirido*. To analyse more intricately the implications of this linguistic relationship

[23] Cherríe Moraga, *Giving Up the Ghost* [initially published in an earlier version in 1986] in *Heroes and Saints and Other Plays* (Albuquerque: West End Press, 2000), 26.

between Spanish and English in Moraga's writing, and how it might affect indigenous groups, it is necessary to undertake a brief overview of the role language plays in nation formation in order to understand how Moraga overlooks the exclusionary connotations of her language politics.

Reacting to the machinations of empire, the decolonizing responses of subjugated peoples have frequently taken on the form of nationalism in order to assign a group of people autonomy and independence.[24] Much like the processes of imperialism, the nationalist congruency between political and national units is often established through language. 'Language is,' after all, 'the perfect instrument of empire,' Antonio de Nebrija commented as early as 1492, after publishing his *Gramática de la lengua castellana*.[25]

Ernest Renan dismisses language, as well as race, religious affinities and geography, as shaping nations arguing instead that, 'A nation is a spiritual principle, the outcome of the profound complications of history; it is a spiritual family not a group determined by the shape of the earth.'[26] Various scholars would disagree with Renan's dismissal of language's role in shaping nationalities. Johann Herder, writing even earlier, posed the question:

> Has a nationality anything dearer than the speech of its fathers? In its speech resides its whole thought domain, its tradition, history, religion and basis of life, all its heart and soul. To deprive a people of its speech is to deprive it of its one eternal good…. With language is created the heart of a people.[27]

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[24] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* ([Second Edition] Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6.
[25] Quoted in Vicente Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 23.
[26] Ernest Renan, 'What is a Nation?', 18-19.
[27] Johann Herder (1783) quoted in Clare Mar-Molinero, *The Politics of Language in the Spanish-Speaking World: From colonisation to globalisation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 9.

Moraga's nation does maintain Renan's spiritual principle, a wish to discover a 'global community' where nature, and our preservation of nature, is the higher authority, and humans give up their capacity for greed (*LG*, 174). This principle is also, however, a response to obvious political and social factors that have shaped the United States, including its language politics.

Historical accounts of the Americas demonstrate how language and colonialism are uncomfortably connected in the United States, as elsewhere. The prevailing idea behind assimilationist schemes such as Indian Schools was that, 'through sameness of language is produced sameness of thought.'[28] The erosion of indigenous languages through various enforcements including these schools demonstrates how the imposition of English has eaten away at indigenous societies in order to establish the predominance and power of English and the society it represents. Nationalist projects responding to a history of oppression therefore often involve attempts to reject and redress the power that has been influenced through language. This is done, nevertheless, through a comparable mechanism whereby a different yet similar focus is placed upon a decolonizing nationalism's own language. If, as Foucault would have it, language is power, then it is the intention of the fledgling nation to resituate itself within this unbalanced equation, through an assertion of the importance and value of its own language.[29] (It should be noted that the equation itself has not changed but is merely being redressed through attempted

[28] From the 1868 "Peace Commission" of generals and philanthropists quoted in Katherine Jensen, 'Civilization and Assimilation in the Colonized Schooling of Native Americans' in Philip G. Altbach and Gail P. Kelly (Eds.), *Education and the Colonial Experience* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books, 1984), 166.

[29] It is vital to note that my intention is not to belittle the motivations of nationalist projects responding to the oppression of empire building and colonisation. These projects are often born of a very real need to halt a cycle of oppression, and to establish greater rights for its citizens/subjects. What interests me here are the ways in which, with regard to language specifically, these projects in fact mirror some of the mechanisms of the very apparatus they react to. It is this reaction that begs a deeper investigation with regard to Moraga's nation, not just for what it suggests about Queer Aztlán but for what it portends for other communities.

shifts in authority.) But the word *fledgling* leads us back to differentiations between nationalism and nation.

It is helpful, in the context of Moraga's work, to illuminate this distinction between nationalism and nation, for it becomes evident through this difference that the construction of Queer Aztlán may be dependent upon a potentially unsound enactment of nationalism. Ernest Gellner argues that nations are no more than myths: 'Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent … political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: *that* is a reality.'[30] The processes of nationalism are more tangible than any concrete nation as such. I do not go so far as to argue that Moraga is guilty of 'obliterating' pre-existing cultures but I would suggest, however, that her use of language is extremely problematic for indigenous groups who do not fall within the immediate borders of Queer Aztlán's nation. And the borders of Queer Aztlán, despite appearing so inclusive, are quite specific, i.e. Mexican: Aztlán has '…everything to do with Mexican birds, Mexican beaches, and Mexican babies right here in Califas.... *This is México, Raza territory*…' (*LG*, 150-51). I would argue that one of the myths perpetuated by Moraga's nationalism is a cohesive relationship to an indigeneity, to her placing of 'la Chicana Indígena' at the centre of this project.[31]

One of the factors that makes the relationship of Chicano nationalism to indigenous peoples so troublesome, within a project that claims allegiance to the 'righteous radicalism' of other progressive nationalisms (*LG*, 149), is that Moraga maintains the use of Spanish, a colonial legacy. Moraga does not claim that Chicana/o

[30] Ernest Gellner quoted in Hobsbawm, 10.
[31] There is also a troublesome element to Moraga's situating of indigenous images in the past, potentially eradicating any contemporary agency to indigenous peoples and perpetuating the myth that Native Americans are dead. This issue will be addressed in Chapter Five on Moraga's treatment of the indigenous woman.

relations to indigenous heritage are entirely idyllic. Through the embodiment of *la mestiza*, there is clearly a troubled history at play involving Spanish colonization of Indians and a Mexican heritage that perpetuates patriarchal systems. Moraga recognises the contradictions of this heritage. In 'La Ofrenda', Dolores/Dottie/Lola struggles to interpret Tiny's body through her mixed-race eyes: 'The blue and the brown eye were working at this one, working hard. I try to isolate each eye, see if I come up with different conclusions depending on which eye and which color I'm working with. Figure one is the European view, the other the Indian' (*LG*, 81). However, in 'Queer Aztlán', Moraga does not seem to connect these contradictions with her continued use and promotion of Spanish. In this sense, her nationalism equates very much to some of the early ideas of Ernest Renan, who argued that 'Forgetting … is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation…. [T]he essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things.'[32] In 'forgetting' the impact of Spanish colonialism upon indigenous peoples, Chicano nationalism is able to foster unity amongst its members around a commonality of language. It is helpful at this point to outline the workings of the Chicano Movement's initial civil rights era in order to clarify *el movimiento's* nationalism, which will help us to understand why Spanish has become so important to the Chicana/o community, what this entails for non-Spanish-speaking indigenous groups, and the effect of Moraga's selective polarisation of Spanish and English upon her attempts to address historical and socio-political inequities.

In order to analyse the effects Moraga wishes to have on language and society as an activist writer, and the specific legalities she wishes to affect in the United States, it is

[32] Renan, 11.

necessary to understand the contemporary socio-political environments that have shaped Moraga's use of Spanish. This involves an understanding of the Chicano Movement's approach to language, and a look at more recent legislation that has rekindled the language debates of the civil rights era.

For Moraga, and for the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 70s, language was a key factor, aesthetically and politically, in creating and communicating Chicano nationalism. As we can see from the title of Manuel J. Martinez's essay, 'The Art of the Chicano Movement, and the Movement of Chicano Art',[33] art and politics are intertwined for Mexican Americans active in the civil rights era. Culture, specifically artistic cultural production, was seen as a tool of this nationalism. El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan, adopted at the Chicano Youth Conference in 1969 in Denver, Colorado, outlines the goals of the conference participants, and has come to represent the Movement's aim to gain recognition as a sovereign nation: 'We Declare the Independence of our Mestizo Nation. We are a Bronze People with a Bronze Culture. Before the world, before all of North America, before all our brothers in the Bronze Continent, We are a Nation, We are a Union of free pueblos, We are Aztlan.'[34] El Plan's first point is clear in outlining the importance of nationalism to its project of independence: 'Nationalism as the key to organization transcends all religious, political, class, and economic factions or boundaries. Nationalism is the common denominator that all members of La Raza can agree upon.'[35] As an organising tool, this nationalism at once recognises its mestizo heritage and distances itself from

[33] Manuel J. Martinez, 'The Art of the Chicano Movement, and the Movement of Chicano Art' in Luis Valdez and Stan Steiner (Eds.), *Aztlan: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972).
[34] El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan, in Luis Valdez and Stan Steiner (Eds.), *Aztlan: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature* (Vintage Books: New York, 1972), 403.
[35] Ibid., 404.

Europe. There is a clear choice being made that situates El Plan in an indigenous framework. The enemy is 'the brutal "Gringo"' and 'the foreigner "Gabacho," who exploits our riches and destroys our culture.'[36] Aztlan belongs to those who work the fields, 'not to the foreign Europeans.'[37] However, the Spanish words used to describe these Europeans, *gringo* and *gabacho*, make it clear that the Europeans in question are not Spanish, both of these words being derogatory terms used in Latin America to describe Anglos of non-Iberian European descent.[38] The Spanish naming of the 'Bronze People' as *La Raza* also sets up a clear division between Iberian and non-Iberian Europeans, and foregrounds Spanish. Self-determination is key to nationalist movements, making it intriguing that Chicano autonomy, connected as it is to an indigenous heritage, involves the naming of an oppressed people in a colonial language.

As Moraga and other writers are keen to point out, their mestizo/a identity involves recognising the role that Spanish colonialism has played in their mixed heritage. This recognition has become, through efforts to counter negative connotations of being mixed race, a source of pride. Jose Vasconcelos' notion of *la raza cosmica* is a notable contribution to this effort. 'We are,' the philosopher and politician wrote, 'the prodigal sons of a homeland which we cannot even define but which we are beginning at last to observe. She is Castilian and Moorish, with Aztec markings.'[39] In his 1925 essay, Vasconcelos, in an attempt to bolster national sentiment following the Mexican Revolution, argued that having the blood of many

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[36] Ibid., 402 & 403.
[37] Ibid., 403.
[38] The *Oxford Spanish Dictionary* defines *gringo* as 'Foreigner (from a non-Spanish speaking country). A pejorative term in Latin America used to refer to white English speakers.' It is aligned with the word *norteamericano*, or *Yankee*. *Gabacho* has a similar definition: 'foreign (of North American or European origin).'
[39] Quoted in Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* ([originally published 1950] London: Penguin Books, 1990), 153.

races made the colonised peoples of the Americas, or *la raza de bronce*, a superior group. Vasconcelos was part of a Mexican intelligentsia undertaking a cultural project to define a Mexican culture and tradition. This involved acknowledging the everyday Mexican by promoting popular art forms that included regional and Indian themes.[40] Although Vasconcelos' raza cosmica plays into obviously flawed notions of race, the same notions that were often used to justify colonialism, its purpose was to give, or create, a tradition and culture for an oppressed and demoralized people. The links between revolutionary Mexican sentiment and the Chicano movement are clear, with el movimiento adopting Vasconcelos' racial label. Generations later, Mexican Americans of the civil rights era adopted this notion within an environment of racial pride, heavily influenced by the African American civil rights movement.

In highlighting the links between Mexican and Chicano cultural nationalism, we see the congruent difficulties both movements faced in articulating their troubled, violent histories that contributed to their contemporary societies. One of the goals of the Chicano Movement was to emphasise this congruency; to emphasise its *Mexicanness*. To address the class disparities fuelling the Mexican Revolution, Emiliano Zapata and his following of agricultural labourers proposed a return to a pre-Columbian communal ownership of land: 'The image the revolutionaries instinctively made for themselves of a Golden Age lay in the remotest past. Utopia for them was not the construction of a future but a return to the source, to the beginning.'[41] Regarded as a forerunner and representative of the Chicano Movement, César Chávez led the United Farm Workers union, with Dolores Huerta. Like the Zapatistas, the UFW was concerned with the rights of poor agricultural workers. This class-based, grassroots approach became a focal point of the Chicano Movement, as

[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., 370.

we can see from El Plan's concentration on 'those who plant the seeds, water the fields, and gather the crops.' This class disparity has been articulated through Spanish that highlights Chicanos' connections to Mexican revolutionaries, as we can see from Oscar Zeta Acosta's description of a school 'Blow Out', or walk out:

> "Viva Zapata!" through the bullhorn.
> *"!Qué Viva!"* roars the crowd.
> "Viva Pancho Villa!"
> *"!Qué Viva!"*
> "Viva Cesar Chavez!"
> *"!Qué Viva!"*
> "Viva Corky Gonzales!"
> *"!Qué Viva!"*
> "Viva Reis Lopez Tijerina!"
> *"!Qué Viva!"*[42]

In Acosta's California of the 1960s, the names of Mexican revolutionaries are not out of place, and they are invoked in a Spanish tongue. Although El Plan commits all spheres of Chicano society to its goal of liberation including 'the writer, the teacher, the worker, the professional,'[43] it quite clearly foregrounds a grassroots, urban and agricultural following, 'the barrio, the campo, the ranchero.'[44] Some of Moraga's plays continue this focus, with *Watsonville*, *Circle in the Dirt* and *Heroes and Saints* centred around farm workers and inner-city areas in California.[45] *Heroes and Saints* was directly influenced by the UFW documentary on the town of McFarland, *The Wrath of Grapes*, where pesticides had caused cancer clusters and birth defects in farm workers and their children.[46] This mirrors the societal affinities of the Zapatistas, demonstrating the profound influence revolutionary Mexico had on its future generations in the United States. This influence runs as deep as the Chicano

[42] Oscar Zeta Acosta, *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 40.
[43] El Plan, 404.
[44] Ibid., 404.
[45] Cherríe Moraga, *Watsonville / Circle in the Dirt* (Albuquerque: West End Press, 2005); *Heroes and Saints & Other Plays*.
[46] Author's Notes, Moraga, *Heroes and Saints*, 89.

Movement's depiction of utopian Aztlán through a Mexican national identity. El Plan even proposes 16 September, the birthdate of Mexican Independence, as the day for a national walkout by Chicanos in colleges and schools.[47] It is worth reiterating here that Chicanos did not want the Southwest to be returned to Mexico; they wanted independence, or rather, self-determination *within* the United States that emphasised their Mexican roots and the Mexican history of the Southwest. Chicanos at once depicted a return to a pre-Columbian utopia, and a return to the rights they were afforded under the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In effect, Chicanos wanted to be recognised as *Mexican Americans*. To be acknowledged as such, Spanish became a political necessity for the Chicano Movement, identifying a Mexican nationality in the Southwest United States that used to be part of Mexico.

In the civil rights era, Mexican Americans found themselves trying to validate their identity in the face of Anglo animosity that had devalued Iberian cultures. This was not just a contemporary situation, as Manuel Machado notes a long-standing animosity between Anglo and Iberian worlds:

> Centuries of religious and dynastic conflicts between Spanish Hapsburgs and English monarchies, usually in alliance with the Dutch, resulted in a barrage of propaganda against the defenders of Catholic orthodoxy in Spain. The flood of anti-Iberian writings that engulfed England at the time of English settlement in North America infiltrated the general culture of these new Anglo dominions. The thrust for United States independence in the eighteenth century, while severing political ties with England, retained a cultural union that included essentially anti-Iberian attitudes. United States westward expansion inevitably carried these views into areas where an Hispanic culture dominated and was subsequently submerged by the more aggressive Anglo values.[48]

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[47] El Plan, 406.

[48] Manuel A. Machado, Jr., 'The Mexican American: A Problem in Cross-Cultural Identity', in Z. Anthony Kruszewski, Richard L. Hough, and Jacob Ornstein-Galicia (Eds.), *Politics and Society in the Southwest: Ethnicity and Chicano Pluralism* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1982), 48. Vasconcelos also notes this age-old animosity: 'Our age became, and continues to be, a conflict of Latinism against Anglo-Saxonism; a conflict of institutions, aims and ideals.' José Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 10.

What is of interest about Machado's narrative is the correlation between this centuries-old animosity and the cultural-political climates of post-1848 United States Southwest, Chicano civil rights, and Moraga's rhetoric. Adding authority to their land claims, these arenas look to a utopian indigenous past, but the arguments of these various eras are often framed in a battle between English and Spanish. In Machado's description there is no acknowledgment of indigenous groups, their circumstances hijacked by a linguistic war between colonial powers. Moraga's writing continues to enact this battle, magnifying a disparity between the two languages that positions Spanish as the subject of a contemporary colonisation. To understand this reframing between English and Spanish, it is necessary to outline the specific socio-political circumstances that have brought this linguistic animosity to a head for Moraga.

Bilingual education: Proposition 227 as 'internal colonisation'

Moraga refers to a number of initiatives in her writing, mostly with regard to her home state, California. These initiatives include: Proposition 209 (passed in 1996), known as the "California Civil Rights Initiative" that included an abolition of affirmative-action equal-opportunity programmes; and Proposition 187 (passed in 1994), which denied illegal immigrants access to public services such as health care (this proposition has since been repealed) (*LWY*, 219-220). It is, however, with Proposition 227 and the ensuing English Only campaign that we can see the language politics which fuel Moraga's nationalist ideas and her use of Spanish. In a reversal of fortune, Spanish is no longer the coloniser but the colonised, struggling to remain the identifying language of various communities.[49] In the political climate of Proposition

[49] Although this work focuses on Spanish in a Mexican American context, it is important to remember that Spanish is also an identifying language for other communities in the United States, too. In 2007, legal permanent residents in the United States were recorded from

227's formation, it is possible to see beneath the surface of educational reform issues that were espoused by the proposition's defenders, to a greater concern with immigration. These are, it turns out, not just concerns but deeply guarded fears: not fears that the U.S. education system will be unable to cope with the increasing influx of Mexican immigrants, but a sense of panic that the national identity of Anglo-America is at risk through an erosion of that cornerstone of nationalism, language; an erosion attributed to the increasing influence of identity politics upon educational settings. Like proponents of identity politics who try to affect the provision of education, those who disagree with this approach have recognised the importance of education and schools in forming national identity: 'What students are taught in schools,' argues Arthur Schlesinger, 'affects the way they will thereafter see and treat other Americans, the way they will thereafter conceive the purposes of the republic. The debate around the curriculum is a debate about what it means to be an American.'[50] Schlesinger sees identity politics as a threat to national identity, conflating heterogeneity with a dilution of American identity when he reacts to 1987 changes to the New York State history curriculum by asking, 'When does obsession with differences begin to threaten the idea of an overarching American nationality?'[51] This dismissal of heterogeneity is reflected in the approaches of both sides of the argument, through an oversimplification of the continuing animosity between English and Spanish that leaves little room for dialogue and an assessment of the relational properties of these languages. The need for this dialogue is evident in Moraga's

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various Central and South American countries including Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala and Peru, all of whom may speak Spanish. See Kelly Jefferys and Randall Monger, 'U.S. Legal Permanent Residents: 2007' (Annual Flow Report, U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office of Immigration Statistics, March 2008). Spanish does not only identify Mexicans and Mexican Americans. The political and media response to English-only campaigns and bilingual education, however, implicitly involves Mexicans.

[50] Arthur M. Schlesinger, jr., *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 1998 [originally published 1991]), 22.

[51] Ibid., 81.

approach to language identity politics that oversimplifies the bilingualism debate through a coloniser-colonised dynamic, a polarisation that fails to account for the possibility of being simultaneously oppressor and oppressed. In order to situate Spanish as emblematic of oppressed Mexican Americans, Moraga utilises notions of 'internal colonisation'.

'…We are a nation within a nation. An internal nation whose existence defies borders of language, geography, race…. Chicanos are also a nation of people, internally colonized within the borders of the U.S. nation-state' (*LG*, 54, 169). In arguing that the Chicano nation resides within the larger, more powerful nation of the United States, and that colonialism is alive and well in the U.S. and elsewhere, Moraga constructs an interpretation of *internal colonisation*. The larger nation of the United States is seen to be subjugating smaller, less powerful nations that resides within it. One of the clearest illustrations of Moraga's idea of internal colonisation is evoked through her depiction of language use in the United States. Moraga's forceful elaborations on language have demonstrated the necessity of Spanish as a cultural signifier and cultural bond for many Chicanas/os. To lose this signifier would be to lose a construction of a worldview.[52] In the fight against educational discrimination and the surrounding identity politics of language, we can see how the model of internal colonisation has become relevant for Chicanos, and for Moraga's project of being an activist writer.

For Chicanos, the internal colony model transformed intellectual discussions of the Mexican American experience, offering an alternative to assimilationist

[52] 'When a language dies, a possible world dies with it.' George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), xiv.

ideologies.[53] Earliest uses of the term *internal colonialism* referred to physical conquests of land within political boundaries.[54] The term has come to connote a number of meanings, including a dependency thesis that ascribes the periphery being subjected to an inferior economic status by a dominant core within a single set of political institutions.[55] Peter Calvert argues that internal colonisation is not merely metaphorical in its allusions to colonial processes:

> This is not just a metaphorical usage, to be avoided because of the obvious risk that it will detract from the uniqueness of the colonial experience. It *is* a colonial experience, though in a new (or revised) guise…. Internal colonisation parallels in all important respects external colonisation, characterised as it is by settlement; extension of political control; relations of superordination/subordination; implied or actual use of coercion.'[56]

The difference between external and internal colonisation is that in the latter, power lies with an elite, not a country.[57] The meaning of most interests here is the idea of internal colonialism as the dominance of one cultural group over another, within a nation. This notion was used by Stokely Carmichael and Charles V Hamilton in 1967 to explore racial developments within the United States, specifically the oppression of African Americans, and implies a subjection of ethnic minorities to a dominant culture.[58] Eldridge Cleaver argued that African Americans were 'stolen people held in a colonial status on stolen land,' and that 'any analysis which does not acknowledge the colonial status of black people cannot hope to deal with the real problem.'[59] Black ghettoes, Cleaver went on to argue, represent the 'consequence of the imposition of

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[53] Ignacio M. García, 'Juncture In The Road: Chicana Studies Since "El Plan de Santa Barbara" ' in David R. Maciel and Isidro D. Ortiz (Eds.), *Chicanas/Chicanos at the Crossroads: Social, Economic, and Political Change* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1996), 185.
[54] Peter Calvert, 'Internal colonisation, development and environment', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No.1 (2001), 51.
[55] Ibid., 52.
[56] Ibid., 52-3.
[57] Ibid., 54.
[58] Ibid., 52. See also Robert J. Hind, 'The Internal Colonial Concept', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 26, No.3 (Jul., 1984), 543.
[59] Quoted in Hind, 546.

external power and the institutionalization of powerlessness. In this respect, they are in fact social, political, educational, and above all – economic colonies.'[60] Ronald Bailey and Guillermo Flores also argue a similarity between the situation of colonial and ex-colonial people all over the world, and that of racial minorities in the United States:

> …it is our belief that Native-Americans, Chicanos, Afro-Americans, Puerto-Ricans, Philipinos, and Asian-Americans constitute domestic colonies of white U.S. society. In more than a metaphoric sense, these groups are nations within a nation, fragmented from their native lands by experiential, temporal, and spatial barriers and from themselves as populations dispersed throughout the urban and rural centers of this country.[61]

This fragmentation has already been demonstrated in Moraga's writing through her project to learn and validate Spanish as an attempt to assuage the cultural dispersal of Chicanos. Although Moraga's semi-autobiographical writing narrates a seemingly private relationship to Spanish, focusing on the relation between language and familial-cultural heritage, public manifestations of Spanish are equally important to Moraga, in a socio-political environment divided over the identity politics of bilingual education and the ensuing attempts to establish the singularity of either English or Spanish.

Since 1923, when Nebraska amended its state constitution to make English its official language, various states have followed suit, with California adopting English as its official language as recently as 1986.[62] Immigration from south of the border is

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[60] Quoted in ibid.
[61] Ronald Bailey and Guillermo Flores quoted in Gilbert G. González, 'A Critique of the Internal Colony Model', *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 1, No.1, Dependency Theory: A Reassessment (Spring, 1974), 155.
[62] Through Proposition 63, California was the seventh state to declare English its official language. After Nebraska the other states to do so were Illinois (1969), Virginia (1981), Indiana (1984), Kentucky (1984), and Tennessee (1984). This was followed by Arizona, Colorado and Florida declaring the same, between 1986 and 1988, through constitutional amendments. Susannah D. A. MacKaye, 'California Proposition 63: Language Attitudes Reflected in the Public Debate', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 508, English Plus: Issues in Bilingual Education (Mar., 1990), 136.

not the only affront to the United States' sense of nationality. Despite the various immigrants who have created the very fibre of the United States, there is a clear agenda to eradicate any public acknowledgment of this diversity, through an assimilationist agenda that sanctifies and legislates the use of English language. The very notion of 'native' itself has been challenged in recent discourse on language use, with English attempting to claim this title for itself, usurping the cultures of both indigenous groups as well as established and recent immigrants.

Proposition 227 (hereafter referred to as 227) was passed by sixty-one per cent of the California electorate, on June 2, 1998. The next day, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), along with other civil rights groups, filed a petition for an injunction against 227. The federal district court in San Francisco denied the injunction on July 15, 1998, making 227 the law in California governing the education of language minority students on August 3, 1998.[63] Districts were required to implement 227 almost immediately, at the beginning of the 1998-99 school year.[64]

This new legislation requires that English learners (ELs) be taught 'overwhelmingly in English,' as opposed to being taught in their primary language, through structured or sheltered English immersion programs (SEI) during 'a temporary period not normally intended to exceed one year,' after which they are then transferred to mainstream English-language classrooms.[65] The Community Based English Tutoring (CBET) programme was also included in 227. This programme is designed to provide 'free or subsidized English-language instruction to parents or

[63] Jill Kerper Mora, http://coe.sdsu.edu/people/jmora/Prop227PPT/sld002.htm.
[64] Thomas B. Parrish *et al*, *Effects of the Implementation of Proposition 227 on the Education of English Learners, K-12: Findings from a Five-Year Evaluation* (Submitted to California Department of Education, by American Institutes for Research and WestEd, 24 January, 2006), II-10.
[65] Ibid., vii.

other members of the community who in turn pledge to provide English-language tutoring to California school children who are limited-English proficient.'[66] The idea, then, is to foreground the acquisition of English, through schools as well as the surrounding community. Various independent campaigns supported the abolition of bilingual education, through a rhetoric of 'English-only'.

The Unz Initiative to abolish bilingual education takes its name from Ron Unz, the multimillionaire software developer and former Republican candidate for governor, who financed and directed the campaign.[67] Demonstrating an impressive knack for public relations, the Unz Initiative entitled its campaign, 'English for the Children'. Although passed in 1998, the impetus behind 227 is ongoing, as the campaign has taken on national proportions. Arizona has since legislated to end bilingual education under its Proposition 203, passed on November 7, 2000,[68] and in November 2002, Massachusetts also ruled that students not proficient in English are to be taught in English and in English language classrooms, mirroring California's post-227 immersion programmes.[69] Entitled 'onenation.org', English for the Children's website proposes, 'with your help,' to 'end bilingual education nationwide in the near future.'[70] English for the Children utilises an inclusive rhetoric that works not through recognising diversity but through assimilation into 'one nation'. Any 'difference', in this case linguistic, that immigrants to the United States wish to maintain must be hidden or eradicated.

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[66] Quoted in ibid.
[67] James Crawford, *At War With Diversity: US Language Policy in an Age of Anxiety* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 2000), 106.
[68] The text of Proposition 203 is available from the Arizona Board of Education's website: http://www.azed.gov/asd/lep/PROPOSITION203.pdf.
[69] For the Massachusetts legislation, see The General Laws of Massachusetts, Part I. Administration of the Government. Title XII. Education. Chapter 71A. Transitional Bilingual Education: http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/71a-4.htm.
[70] http://www.onenation.org/.

The Unz Initiative begins its campaign by redefining 'bilingual'. Bilingual education is presented as consisting of Spanish alone, precluding the practice that children are taught English alongside and through the use of their primary language. In the Unz Initiative's ballot for the 1998 primaries, the second point states, 'For most of California's non-English speaking students, bilingual education actually means monolingual, SPANISH-ONLY education for the first 4 to 7 years of school.'[71] The decision to vote for or against 227 is reduced to a choice between Spanish or English.

One of the most striking and subversive aspects of English for the Children, however, lies in its claim to be a bipartisan campaign: 'Our nationwide effort … is bipartisan, with Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, immigrants and the native-born.'[72] In the last, hyphenated word of this sentence, there is an intriguing use of 'native'. The Unz Initiative takes on the rhetoric of the indigenous, indeed situates itself *as* the 'native'. This functions to resituate English as the language out of which the nation is born and thus a language in need of protection. The Unz Initiative enacts an underplayed yet immense displacement, which attempts to redefine indigenous languages in order to enhance the power of English by having it inscribed in legislation. English becomes the 'victim' in need of protection (and Latinos are 'victims' for being denied an education in English), utilising the very terminology used to criticise proponents of identity politics who allegedly 'claim the mantle of victimhood.'[73] With English as the 'native-born', the Unz Initiative also conveniently overlooks the fact that European immigrants to the Americas spoke

[71] From the English Language in Public Schools Initiative Statute (Proposition 227), one of the ballot measures of the California 1998 Primaries: http://primary98.sos.ca.gov/VoterGuide/Propositions/227yesarg.htm.
[72] http://www.onenation.org/.
[73] Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of the Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked by Culture Wars* (Henry Holt: New York, 1995), 1.

numerous languages other than English,[74] and that Spanish was spoken in the Southwestern regions before and after their cession to the United States from Mexico in 1848. And of course before any of these European languages made themselves known on American soil, there were hundreds of indigenous languages in use.[75]

English for the Children is not the first movement of its kind in the United States. English for the Children is part of a larger movement that began in the 1980s. Slightly preceding Unz's efforts, the modern English-only movement dates from 1983, when former Senator S. I. Hayakawa of California and Dr. John Tanton founded US English.[76] US English has lobbied for Official English in Congress, state legislatures and ballot campaigns, resulting in the consideration of proposals by forty-eight states.[77] In line with the internal colonisation model, arguments have been made that the English Only movement is a modern form of colonisation. Donald Macedo draws parallels between classical colonial language policies and the ideological importance placed on English in the United States, through the devaluation of other languages:

> …I can readily see many similarities between the colonial ideology and the dominant values that inform the U.S. English Only movement. Colonialism imposes "distinction" as an ideological yardstick against which all other cultural values are measured, including language. On the one hand, this ideological yardstick serves to overcelebrate the dominant group's language to a level of mystification (i.e., viewing English as education itself and measuring the success of bilingual programs only in terms of success in English acquisition) and, on the other hand, it devalues other languages spoken by an ever-increasing number of students who now populate most urban public schools.[78]

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[74] Early European settlers in North America utilised educational institutions to differentiate ethnic identifications. See Bernard Bailyn, *Education in the Forming of American Society: Needs and Opportunities for Study* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1960), 99-102.
[75] Leanne Hinton estimates that in California alone, over a hundred languages were spoken before Europeans arrived. Leanne Hinton, *Flutes of Fire: Essays on California Indian Languages* (Berkeley, California: Heyday Books, 1994), 13.
[76] Crawford, 22.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Donald Macedo, 'The Colonialism of the English Only Movement', *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 29, No.3 (Apr., 2000), 16.

It is in this atmosphere of cultural-linguistic subjugation that Moraga's identity politics utilise a notion of an internal colony, whereby English is positioned as the ideological yardstick against which all cultures in the United States are measured. There are, however, a number of critiques of internal colonialism, namely that the concept's theoretical application loses rigour in its flexibility and adaptability; with such an extensive historical chronology, internal colonisation fails to incorporate a number of questions and developments.[79] As a result, Robert Hind argues, internal colonisation theory leads to an idealization of precolonial societies, implying 'an improbable degree of cohesion and identity of interest amongst specific social groups,' simplifying complex social relations.[80] This criticism is crucial to our exploration of Moraga's nationalism, and works on a number of levels. Firstly, Moraga's notion of a nation within a nation implies a cohesive, unified Chicano entity, contradicting the very diversity she wishes to foreground. Secondly, Moraga's Chicano nation fails to explore the idea that one person's progressive nationalism is another person's internal colonisation. As Diana Taylor argues,

> The Mayan peoples […] are only one example of a group that does not consider Spanish the language of resistance…. The imposition of Spanish in the Spanish-speaking Americas has historically deprived indigenous groups of their lands, their culture, and their right to active participation in society. Even today the members of rural indigenous communities that do the best economically are those (usually men) who have had access to some education and know enough Spanish to function in the marketplace.[81]

For some indigenous groups, then, an identity politics of language that foregrounds Spanish, perpetuates the already damaging effects of colonialism. Moraga does not explore the possibility that for Native Americans in the United States and elsewhere, her nationalism merely perpetuates oversimplified portrayals of indigenous groups, in

[79] Robert Hind, 'The Internal Colonial Concept', 553.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Diana Taylor, 'Opening Remarks', 6.

order to further her own political objectives, whilst furthering their cultural and economic marginalisation.

Perhaps somewhat contentiously, I would argue that the rhetoric of the Unz Initiative is not so far removed from the workings of Moraga's writing. The political implications are obviously vastly different. Moraga promotes Spanish, but is a bilingual writer, utilising English, too. She does not call for an abolition of English, but for the protection of Spanish. California's legislative impetus is clearly aimed at the supposed threat of increasing immigration from Latin America, especially Spanish-speaking Mexico. Nonetheless, the indigenous connections that suffuse Moraga's writing have a similar effect of trying to establish a sense of 'nativeness'. There is no biological proof that Moraga does or does not have indigenous blood, as she herself admits.[82] But the implication is there in her evocation of 'blood' connections (*LG*, 169). Whether or not an indigenous heritage can be proved is not the point of this argument. I do not wish to undertake an unhelpful and essentialist blood quantum examination of this author. What I do wish to highlight is the incongruity between making claims to an indigenous heritage through a nationalist project that highlights language (Spanish), and the absence of indigenous language within this project. In 'Remembering the Navajo Nation', Moraga's cousin Rudy researches the family's indigenous history. His mother, Tía Lupe, tries to remember her ancestors but, 'She can't recall English *or* Spanish words, just can't seem to bring them to the surface of her tongue' (*LG*, 129). Although Moraga's 'Indianness' relates to her 'Mexicanness', indigenous elements are failed by Spanish; they cannot articulate their experience in a Spanish tongue. Moraga's theoretical framework, of a

[82] 'I don't know how much Indian I got in me. I don't know if it's called Yaqui, Seri, Apache, O'odham … or if the Indian people on my mother's side just gave it all up upon the conquest and were subsumed by Spanish culture which, combined with Indian people and Indian ways, became Mexican.' Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*, 204.

Mexican American nationalism with an indigenous core, is unworkable for the very indigene at the heart of her project.

In arguing that Moraga's brand of nationalism unconsciously assumes an authority over Native American language, it will be noticed that I have barely mentioned any particular indigenous languages, apart from the Nahuatl evoked in images of Aztlán. This is because there is scant mention of indigenous languages within Moraga's own theorisations. It is this absence, and also the generic portrayal of la Chicana Indígena (who will be discussed in Chapter Five), that continues to trouble the project of Queer Aztlán, making it questionable whether Moraga's brand of activism is feasible for the very people she claims for her 'nation'. Penelope Myrtle Kelsey argues that it is possible to 'translate' indigenous worldviews into other languages such as English, French and Spanish, and that various Indian writers do this, but what is being translated are 'unique tribal knowledges, epistemology and philosophy.'[83] In Moraga's use of indigenous imagery, specificities are glossed over; there is little detail of particular peoples. The hope that Queer Aztlán can be 'A Chicano homeland that could embrace *all* its people' and all of their differences does not extend to the cultural and linguistic specificities of the various Native American peoples that inhabit the United States today. Unable to accommodate heterogeneity, Moraga's language politics risk a promotion of separatism, through an oppressive displacement of indigenous languages to an empty interstice, undermining the very notion of an indigenous-influenced 'Chicano'. Although indigenous groups do not fare well through Moraga's theoretical approach to nationalism that demands an impossible

[83] Penelope Myrtle Kelsey, *Tribal Theory in Native American Literature: Dakota and Haudenosaunee Writing and Indigenous Worldviews*, (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 1.

singularity of national identity, there is elsewhere in Moraga's work, a helpful destabilisation of these theorisations through performativity.

In the performativity of her plays, Moraga begins to address the linguistic deficiencies of 'Queer Aztlán', highlighting the gulf between theory and the lived experiences it often claims to represent. The transformative 'lines of flight' of Braidotti's nomadic subject are an attempt to avoid the restrictive binary oppositions emanating from the 'gap between how we live […] and how we represent to ourselves this lived existence in theoretical terms and discourses.'[84] Unlike her political essays, Moraga's dramatic work pushes beyond the rigidity of theory that curtails performativity, through characters who enact a linguistic heterogeneity that is all the more noticeable for Moraga's nationalist formation of a Spanish-English dichotomy. *Heart of the Earth: A Popul Vuh Story* is Moraga's adaptation of the Quiché Maya creation myth. In the play's notes, Moraga is explicit about the language in the play, which includes

> Standard English and Spanish, Quiché, other Mayan tongues, Spanglish, Chicano speech from the Southwest, and the urban colloquialisms of U.S. city streets. I have tried to create a version of the *Popul Vuh* that honors its original language, while acknowledging that Quiché is a living language used not only among the Maya in the highlands of Guatemala, but can also be heard on the streets of New York City, along with Quechua, Nahuatl, Navajo, Lakota, and a myriad of other Indigenous American tongues. (*HW*, 104)

Finally, we see language come to life in a way it cannot within Moraga's Spanish-dominated Queer Aztlán. And it is not just in the notes of the playwright, but on the stage, that indigenous voices are at last performed. In the live action of the stage, indigenous voices are not relegated to a mythical, utopian past but instead resonate in the present.

[84] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 4.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Moraga's contribution to debates around Spanish-English bilingualism in the United States interrogates the writer's attempt to engender a heterogeneous Chicana subjectivity, through an unintentional preservation of a non-contradictory Aristotelian framework. I have outlined the workings of Chicano nationalism that contextualise Moraga's language politics, which posit Spanish as a tool of anti-colonial resistance to Anglo-American assimilation. In conjunction with an adherence to the language politics of Chicano nationalism, Moraga also configures Spanish as a 'mother tongue', highlighting the influence of Moraga's maternal Mexican American heritage upon the articulation of her Chicana lesbianism. This genetic allusion, however, betrays Moraga's tendency to essentialise facets of identity, in this case positing Spanish as an innate proof of Chicano identity, despite the fact that Moraga was not taught Spanish during her childhood. Instead, this chapter has argued that Moraga's limited assessment of her language acquisition overlooks the anti-binaristic potential of Rosi Braidotti's nomadic subject, who is concerned with transformation rather than inscription.

The pitfalls of Moraga's language politics are displayed in her response to California's Proposition 227 to abolish bilingual education. Whilst Moraga justifiably refutes the negative connotations placed upon Spanish through English-only campaigns, she has, this chapter has argued, nonetheless done so through the same framework of non-contradiction that maintains dualistic oppositions. Foregrounding Spanish may temporarily outmanoeuvre English-only proponents but this singular articulation of language leaves no space for languages outside the binary of oppressor-oppressed. This results in an inadvertent exclusionary subjugation of the

indigenous languages, undermining Chicano nationalist efforts to foreground an indigenous heritage.

Finally, I have argued that despite the questionable Aristotelian framework of Moraga's language politics, the performativity of her plays engenders a more helpfully complex approach to language, incorporating varieties of English, Spanish and indigenous languages into the staging of identity. The need for such complexity is also evident in the next chapter, which moves from the national staging of identity politics, to local-level feminist coalitions in an argument for the utility of contradiction in overcoming intra-group divisions.

Chapter Three

A kinetic subjectivity: the contradictory politics of cross-racial feminist alliance

> *By the end of the evening of our first visit together, Barbara comes into the front room where she has made a bed for me. She kisses me. Then grabbing my shoulders she says, very solid-like, "we're sisters." I nod, put myself into bed, and roll around with this word, sisters, for two hours before sleep takes on. I earned this with Barbara. It is not a given between us – Chicana and Black – to come to see each other as sisters.*
> Cherríe Moraga[1]

This chapter explores the underlying framework of Aristotelian non-contradiction that distances Cherríe Moraga from the valuable politics arising from cross-racial feminist alliance. From the identity politics at a national level emanating from debates around bilingual education, this chapter moves a step toward the personal, taking a look at local-level, intra-group politics amongst women of colour feminists and Moraga's move away from this form of political organising. I posit that this move stems from a failure to recognise the utility of contradiction in fomenting social justice, resulting from an entrenchment of singularity. Specifically, I critique Moraga's shift away from cross-racial alliances for overlooking the benefits of contradiction espoused through political methodologies of oppositional consciousness applied to women of colour feminist groups – methodologies that acknowledge contradiction – and perpetuating the pervasiveness of singularity.

To expound the idea that Moraga's move away from the difficulties of establishing the heterogeneity of women of colour feminism indicates a delimiting entrenchment of non-contradiction, I will focus on the politics and output of the publishing alliance of which Moraga was a co-founder and member, Kitchen Table:

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[1] Cherríe Moraga in Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga (Eds.), *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983), xiv.

Women of Color Press. Kitchen Table Press, which I will refer to as KTP, exemplifies a stratum of the interlacing of personal and political spheres that fuels Moraga's identity politics: to address the paucity of political outlets for marginalised women, KTP was created to publish the work of women of colour. Placing the thoughts and lives of these women in print was a political move designed to endorse previously unheard, or suppressed, heterogeneous voices that had little conventional political representation. The above epigraph involving fellow KTP member Barbara Smith, however, indicates that tensions emanate from the very heterogeneity that inspires the impetus of this group, affording us an opportunity to analyse the obstacles to diversity within political alliances. Following an outline of Moraga's role in KTP, involving a promotion of the politics of anti-colonial 'U.S. third world feminism' that aimed to unify women of colour activists, I will analyse the methodology of consciousness-raising that inspired this collective of women, in order to demonstrate the dialogic principles upon which KTP based their politics. This focus upon dialogue highlights the desired interactive outcomes of KTP's politics, where suppressed voices are not just heard, but encouraged to work with others across aspects of difference, in a utilisation of identity politics as a means to gauging communal as well individual perceptions of subjectivity, and where and how such perceptions can be altered to engender social justice. Such a dialogic process is not without its challenges, and these difficulties are the focus of feminist theories of oppositional consciousness that influence U.S. third world feminism. My exploration of Chela Sandoval and Donna Haraway's work on enacting forms of oppositional consciousness will demonstrate that Moraga's move away from such practices is indicative of an inability to conceptualise contradiction as beneficial, evidenced through Moraga's focus on race in her recent reflections upon the state of cross-racial alliances.

Moraga's dissatisfaction with cross-racial feminist alliances is made evident through her reflections upon the 1980s feminism of colour movement in the United States. In 2009, discussing Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating's *This Bridge We Call Home*, published twenty years after *This Bridge Called My Back* and including men and white women, Moraga states:

> As I saw it, our movement, *in practice*, had not arrived at a place of such inclusion. We were still barely understanding how to effectively move beyond the racial categories and strategies of political resistance and identity politics formulated in response to the 1960s and 1970s people-of-color movements, as well as to white feminism and gay liberation. We had yet to effectively develop a national network of coalesced women-of-color organizing, or a women-of-color theory and practice which might incorporate a new generation of Indigenous peoples and immigrants…. All this is what I imagined a "new *Bridge*" might address. From my perspective, to be "inclusive of (even) queer men and white women, at this stage of a U.S. feminism of color, would be to suggest that our movement had developed beyond the need for an autonomous dialogue entrenos. (*XC*, 123)

Concerned that Anzaldúa and Keating's inclusivity lends itself to 'appropriation and misinterpretation, especially by white and middle-class scholars' (*XC*, 124), Moraga maintains a focus on the continuing need to establish the decision-making powers of women of colour in order to foster political strategies that address the combination of economic and racial discrimination faced by these women. Such spaces of dialogue for women of colour have not proved successful for Moraga, however, as she moves increasingly away from cross-racial feminist alliances to a greater focus on work with indigenous women through projects such as Indígena as Scribe (see Introduction).

Like Anzaldúa, Moraga also developed the ideas of *Bridge* into a new text, publishing a Spanish-version of the anthology with Ana Castillo in 1988.[2] Moraga's narrowing of political focus upon Latinas and indigenous women is prompted by a similar critique that she levels against black feminists. Writing in 2000, Moraga

[2] Cherríe Moraga and Ana Castillo (Eds.), *Esta Puente, mi espalda: Voces de mujeres tercermundistas en los Estados Unidos* (Ism Press, Inc: San Francisco, 1988).

reflects that although the 1980s feminism of colour movement united women of colour and brought them closer to their specific cultural experiences, 'to my disappointment, many African Americans were equally politically engaged in the same bipolar [black and white] version of the history of U.S. race relations.' *(XC*, 14) Moraga refers here to the black-white paradigm that is argued to underpin the construction of race in the United States, which posits white as a 'pure' category and its opposition, black, as a devalued negation.[3] Moraga's move away from women of colour feminism results from a contention that the effects of race upon women who are neither black nor white, are detrimentally under-analysed and it is race, after all, that was a key motivating issue for the publishing alliance through which Moraga contributed towards cross-racial feminism. At first sight, Moraga's disengagement from this exclusionary logic might seem to be helpfully mindful of Donna Haraway's critique of the 'important inadequacies in feminist analysis [of the 1980s] which has proceeded as if the organic, hierarchical dualism ordering discourse in the West since Aristotle still ruled.'[4] An understanding of the type of alliance developed through KTP, however, will enable a contextualisation of Moraga's race-centred conceptualisation of women of colour feminism, which highlights an enactment of identity politics committed, yet averse, to contradiction.

Kitchen Table Press: a literary alliance

As well as contextualising Moraga's race-centred approach to cross-racial feminism, my exploration of Moraga's publishing role will support my project's secondary goal

[3] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States From the 1960s to the 1980s* (Routledge: New York and London, 1986), 60, 58.
[4] Donna Haraway, 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s' in Linda J. Nicholson (Ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (Routledge: New York and London, 1990), 205.

to offer helpful new ways to approach the work of Moraga through a consideration of writing and publishing as political activism. Although coalitions and alliances are generally associated with more obviously concrete political endeavours around issues such as civil rights, gender equality, and at local levels, community issues, they also occur in less apparent ways such as publishing but, I argue, remain no less potent.[5] In order to contextualise the articulation of KTP as an alliance, it is necessary to establish what constitutes this form of partnership.

Lisa Albrecht and Rose Brewer distinguish between 'alliance' and 'coalition':

> …we see the concept of alliance as a new level of commitment that is longer-standing, deeper, and built upon more trusting political relationships.… Out of our vision of alliance formation we see allies as people who struggle together on a number of progressive fronts, not just on a single issue that might emerge in a short-term coalition. We see coalitions as short-term solutions and alliance formation as ongoing, long-term arrangements for more far-reaching structural change.… The crux of alliance building is a credible model of leadership that will account for differences and the re-visioning of traditional conceptions of power.[6]

Utilising the work of Bystydzienski and Schacht, Stephanie Gilmore sees more of a fluctuation between coalitions and alliances, defining them as:

> "fluid sites of collective behavior where the blending of multiple personal identities with political activism interacts with structural conditions to influence the development of commitments, strategies, and specific actions." …[F]eminists in the 1970s were creating these sites, blending identities and activism, and mobilizing for meaningful and significant change. Bystydzienski and Schacht identify the bottom-line goal of coalitions or alliances as changing "interpersonal relations and social structures in order to eradicate all forms of oppression."[7]

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[5] Kimberly Springer considers intellectual activism to include, 'writing as resistance, political education, consciousness-raising, autobiography as "political witnessing," public statements in major U.S. newspapers, and filing lawsuits.' Kimberly Springer (Ed.), *Still Lifting, Still Climbing: Contemporary African American Women's Activism* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1999), 3.

[6] Lisa Albrecht and Rose M. Brewer, 'Bridges of Power: Women's Multicultural Alliances for Social Change' in Lisa Albrecht and Rose M. Brewer (Eds.), *Bridges of Power: Women's Multicultural Alliances* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1990), 4.

[7] Stephanie Gilmore, 'Thinking about Feminist Coalitions' in Stephanie Gilmore (Ed.), *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 6.

In line with Albrecht and Brewer's recognition of the longer-term impact of alliances reached through structural change, I will maintain the use of 'alliance,' although it is important to acknowledge how coalitions and alliances often overlap. We might view KTP as a coalition, a venture designed to address the absence of U.S. third world feminist writing during a specific era, the 1980s. The publications of KTP, however, are designed to engender long-term 'meaningful and significant change' through changing 'interpersonal relations and social structures in order to eradicate all forms of oppression,' as advanced in publications such as *Bridge*, for example. KTP acts as an alliance to 're-vision' long-lasting changes in 'traditional conceptions of power,' through its promotion of writing by women of colour. More specifically, KTP worked to secure an acknowledgment of writing *as* power, which is evident through an exploration of KTP's origins and output that uncovers a writing project fuelled by an identity politics responding to the limitations of mainstream feminism.

KTP was formed in 1981 by women including Moraga, Barbara Smith, Audre Lorde and Hattie Gossett (*XC*, Note 10, 219), with the aim 'to fill a need felt by women of color for resources with which to confront the "geometric" oppression of their daily lives.'[8] These resources, and the ways and forms in which they were distributed, are not limited to literature, as Smith is cognizant of writing as only part of a larger project of political activism for women of colour. Smith sees publishing presses as one type of autonomous institution needed to promote long-lasting change for women of colour:

> It is absolutely crucial that we make our visions real in a permanent form so that we can be even more effective and reach many more people. I would like to see rape crisis centers, battered women's shelters, women's centers, periodicals, publishers,

[8] Kayann Short, 'Coming to the Table: The Differential Politics of *This Bridge Called My Back'* in Carol Siegel and Ann Kibbey (Eds.), *Eroticism and Containment: Notes from the Flood Plain* (*Genders 20*) (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 9.

> buying co-operatives, clinics, artists' collectives, and ongoing political organizations started and run by women of color.[9]

Smith positions the work of art and publishing alongside institutions more perceptibly associated with offering immediate aid to marginalised women, reiterating the conviction that creative writing can serve a social as well as artistic function. Smith draws together different types of activism beneath the same umbrella, suggesting that publishing does not have to occur exclusively from other forms of activism. KTP work included the creation and distribution of a Freedom Organizing Pamphlet series, including contributions by writers such as Audre Lorde, Merle Woo and Angela Davis.[10] These pamphlets suited the limited funds of a small press such as KTP, as they were quick and inexpensive to produce, and could be used as both feminist organising and classroom materials.[11] KTP also carried out further political outreach by distributing the work of other publishers, acting as a resource on Third World feminism, and 'filling requests for free books to people in prisons and psychiatric institutions (both disproportionately women of color) and to people with AIDS.'[12] It is significant to the dialogic process that I argue is overlooked in Moraga's conceptualisation of cross-racial feminism, that the impetus for the literary as well as grassroots work of KTP was encouraged through the process of consciousness-raising.

To argue that Moraga's shift away from cross-racial feminist alliance is connected to a disengagement with the constructive contradictions arising from dialogue, it is necessary to understand the centrality of consciousness-raising to the

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[9] Barbara Smith (Ed.), *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2000 [First printed New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983]), xl.
[10] Short, 11.
[11] Ibid., 12.
[12] Ibid.

formation and political methodology of KTP. A challenging process of dialogue, consciousness-raising is politically motivated in the tradition of identity politics, to draw links between personal and political spheres in order to acknowledge and eradicate everyday manifestations of oppression. This was a process central to the origins of KTP that derived from preceding women of colour collectives. Transfiguring the work of feminist consciousness-raising into literary forms and laying the groundwork for alliances such as KTP was the Combahee River Collective, whose members included Barbara Smith, Moraga's KTP co-founder.

Combahee was created to address 'racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression' and they saw their main task as 'the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking.'[13] Between 1977 and 1980, Combahee organised a number of intermittent Black Women's Network Retreats.[14] To further the work of Combahee, members Demita Frazier, Beverly Smith and Barbara Smith invited politically active women to the retreats, in order to 'assess the state of our [black feminist] movement, to share information with each other about our political work and to talk about possibilities and issues for organizing black women,'[15] with the goal of 'advancing what Combahee members saw as a burgeoning, nationwide movement.'[16] The goals and formulation of the retreats encapsulate the activist potential of consciousness-raising as a personal means to a public and political end. As can be seen from the initial retreat, the design and scope of consciousness-raising demonstrate the potential for literary elements to affect political theory and in turn, social justice:

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[13] Combahee River Collective mission statement in Kimberly Springer, *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations*, *1968-1980* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 117.
[14] Springer, *Living for the Revolution*, 106.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.

> The women invited to the first retreat were […] predominantly writers, including Cheryl Clarke, Lorraine Bethel, Audre Lorde, and Linda Powell. The retreat organizers encouraged participants to bring written material, including their own creative works, relevant to black feminism. Such an invitation encompassed the idea that black women create theory in many forms – from position papers to magazine articles to prose and poetry – and that further consciousness-raising would grow from concentrated interaction.[17]

The retreat organisers were cognizant of the political potential of imaginative literary pieces combined with the explorations of consciousness-raising that utilised everyday and personal experiences to unpick social constructions and consequently formulate social change. Combahee's goal to instigate 'further consciousness-raising' is clear in the endeavour of members to move beyond the issues of black women, to a form of political collective that maintained the methodologies of Combahee's Network Retreats whilst enabling a wider consideration of oppression faced by various women of colour. This broadening of dialogue to involve non-black women of colour contributed to the creation of KTP and was supported by women such as Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa through their 'U.S. third world feminist' anthology for women of colour, *This Bridge Called My Back.* It is with this form of feminism that we see Moraga's attempts, and failures, to forward her politics of social justice beyond singular conceptions of race.

Bridging diversity: U.S. third world feminism

An outline of Moraga's conceptualisation of U.S. third world feminism is necessary to understanding the dialogic form of politics that Moraga utilises and later moves away from through her contribution to cross-racial feminist alliance. As will become evident, dialogue is more difficult, if not impossible, to enact when underlying principles of singularity are at play and it is these principles that propel Moraga to

[17] Ibid., 107.

transfer her political energy toward more (purportedly) homogeneously identifiable groups.

A collaborative effort as opposed to her later monographs and plays, I view *This Bridge Called My Back: writings by radical women of color* as the first major work published by Moraga, especially given its long-lasting influence.[18] The collaboration points to the goal of the text, which is to 'concentrate on relationships *between women*' (*Bridge*, no page number). *Bridge* combines the writings of women of colour in the United States, including Latinas, African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Chicanas such as Moraga, in a seminal vocalisation of U.S. third world feminism that Chela Sandoval argues, 'made the presence of U.S. third world feminism impossible to ignore in the same terms as it had been throughout the seventies.'[19] The initial motivation for the production of *Bridge* was to stretch the parameters of feminism to address a greater populace than white, middle class women (*Bridge*, xxiii), but this motivation soon turned into a project to examine overlooked divisions between women of colour, as Toni Cade Bambara implies in her foreword:

> …though the initial motive of several siter/riters here may have been to protest, complain or explain to white feminist would-be allies that there are other ties and visions that bind, prior allegiances and priorities that supercede their invitations to coalesce on their terms […], the process of examining that would-be alliance awakens us to new tasks…. (*Bridge*, vi)

These new tasks involve bolstering the political strength of women of colour by exploring 'the possibility of several million women refuting the numbers game

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[18] *Bridge* has been reprinted a number of times, and in 2011, Moraga noted that the anthology was due for another, thirtieth anniversary reprint. At the time of writing, however, it is not yet available. Cherríe L. Moraga, *A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness: Writings, 2000-2010* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2011), Note 10, 219.

[19] Chela Sandoval, 'Feminist Theory under Postmodern Conditions: Toward a Theory of Oppositional Consciousness' in *Sub/versions – Feminist Studies – Work-in-Progress* (University of California, Santa Cruz, Winter 1991), 1.

inherent in "minority," the possibility of denouncing the insulated/orchestrated conflict game of divide and conquer – through the fashioning of potent networks…' (*Bridge*, vi). These are feminist networks connected through political cause, recognising similar forms of oppression that affect women of colour. Without explicitly describing the constitution of this form of feminism, the editors of *Bridge* proclaim an allegiance to the methodology of U.S. third world feminism, describing the anthology as 'a catalyst, not a definitive statement on "Third World Feminism in the U.S."' (*Bridge*, xxvi). While *Bridge* enacts a form of U.S. third world feminism by placing the writing of various women of colour in dialogue with each other, we need to look elsewhere for definitions that highlight the methodologies of U.S. third world feminism, in order to gauge Moraga's decreasing confidence in cross-racial feminist alliances.

Chela Sandoval describes U.S. third world feminism as representative of 'the political alliance made during the 1960s and 1970s between a generation of U.S. feminists of color who were separated by culture, race, class, or gender identifications but united through similar responses to the experience of race oppression.'[20] This is not a definitive description, and other feminists have assigned various designations to the collective work of feminists of colour; Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill use the term 'Multiracial Feminism' to refer to a theorizing of difference that acknowledges the centrality of race to understanding the social construction(s) of gender.[21] Through an anti-colonial methodology, U.S third world feminism attempts

[20] Chela Sandoval, 'U.S. third world feminism: The theory and method of oppositional consciousness in the postmodern world' in George Henderson and Marvin Waterstone (Eds.), *Geographic Thought: A praxis perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2009), Note 3, 349.
[21] Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill, 'Theorizing Difference from Multiracial Feminism', *Feminist Studies* (Vol. 22, No. 2, Summer 1996), 321.

to dismantle dominant feminist thought that oversimplifies or ignores this interweaving of race and gender.

Describing the origins of U.S. third world feminism, Sandoval notes a distinctly anti-colonial objective born of the recognition between worldwide movements of decolonization and 'varying internally colonized communities' in the United States.[22] The impetus for what Chandra Talpade Mohanty and others term a decolonization of theory,[23] is to respond to the damaging historicisation of feminism in the United States that Sandoval refers to as a "hegemonic feminist theory", in line with the work of Gayatri Spivak.[24] This hegemonic feminist theory is, for some feminists of colour, a form of colonisation, if we view this term in line with Mohanty, whereby '…colonization almost invariably implies a relation of structural domination and a suppression – often violent – of the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question.'[25] For Sandoval, this historical distortion has been particularly prevalent in the 1980s, seen through the writings of particular feminists who have organised a feminist history of consciousness into four distinct phases, 'consisting of "liberal," "Marxist," "radical/cultural," and "socialist" feminisms, and which I schematize as "women are the same as men," "women are different from men," "women are superior," and the fourth catchall category, "women are a racially divided class."'[26] These phases, what Sandoval terms 'the great hegemonic model',[27] have been elaborated to 'typify the modes of exchange operating within the oppositional spaces

[22] Sandoval, 'U.S. third world feminism,' 338.
[23] See Chandra Talpade Mohanty's *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Palgrave-MacMillan, 1999).
[24] Sandoval, 'U.S. third world feminism,' 338.
[25] Mohanty, 18.
[26] Sandoval, 'U.S. third world feminism,' 343.
[27] Ibid., 341.

of the women's movement.… Together, they legitimize certain modes of culture and consciousness only to systematically curtail the forms of experiential and theoretical articulations permitted U.S. third world feminism.'[28] This hegemonic typology of feminist praxis[29] not only distorts historical practices but also inhibits future feminist work through a limited conception of how feminism has worked in the past, and can work in the future. Through a helpful inconsistency of form, however, U.S. third world feminists combine the experiential and theoretical through methodologies of consciousness-raising and the 'autotheoretical', delegitimising 'the great hegemonic model' of feminism.

Methodologies of inconsistency: consciousness-raising and the 'autotheoretical'

Through her memoir about the birth of her son, *Waiting in the Wings*, it is evident that Moraga recognises the fruitful potential emanating from a mixture of the autobiographical and the theoretical. This memoir is more than description, instead situating the experience of a lesbian couple becoming parents, into a framework that enables a theorisation upon issues of homophobia, race and nationalism. For example, we come to understand through reflective writing that Moraga's choice of sperm donor is connected to a Chicano nationalist configuration of race, making us consider the ways in which her lesbianism is informed by the machinations of race. Moraga's combination and reconfiguration of traditionally oppositional modes, the subjective experiential and objective theoretical, exemplifies the methodologies of U.S. third world feminism that aim to interrogate the workings of mainstream feminism. These methods of interrogation emanate from, and inspire, dialogic processes that seek to establish subjecthood and improve interpersonal relations, both of which have

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

implications for addressing social injustice. In order to better understand the political promise of these dialogic processes, it is important to outline the trajectory from physical dialogue to the use of publishing as cross-racial feminist activism.

The anti-hegemonic autotheoretical form, a hybrid of theory and autobiography,[30] descends from the methodology of consciousness-raising whose generative potential has been hinted at above, in the work of the Black Women's Network Retreats. The development of feminist consciousness-raising is linked to the goal of identity politics to inscribe and situate the location of marginalised subjectivities within society, in order to remedy this marginalisation. Consciousness-raising involves 'the naming of one's experience'[31] and remains for many women, *the* method of feminism[32]:

> …the way to becoming a female subject has been effected through consciousness-raising…. Through "consciousness-raising" (from women's point of view) women are led to know the world in a different way. Women's experience of politics, of life as sex objects, gives rise to its own method of appropriating that reality: feminist method. It challenges the objectivity of the "empirical gaze" and "rejects the distinction between knowing subject and known object." By having women be the subject of knowledge, the so-called "objectivity" of men is brought into question.[33]

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[30] Stacey Young, *Changing the Wor(l)d: Discourse, Politics, and the Feminist Movement* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 63-64.

[31] Norma Alarcón, 'The Theoretical Subject(s) of *This Bridge Called My Back* and Anglo-American Feminism' in Héctor Calderón and José David Saldívar (Eds), *Criticism in the Borderlands: Studies in Chicano Literature, Culture, and Ideology* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1991), 35.

[32] Estelle Freedman names a number of radical feminist groups across the U.S. who began to use the method of consciousness-raising in the late 1960s after their break from the male-dominated New Left, such as the Redstockings, the Feminists, the Furies, and Radical Women. Estelle B. Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* (London: Profile Books, 2002), 87.

[33] Ibid., 33-4. Jo Reger has also described consciousness-raising as 'a process begun by decentralized women's liberationist groups in which women experience empowerment through discussing their personal experiences and linking it to societal oppression in an egalitarian setting.' Jo Reger, 'More Than One Feminism: Organizational Structure and the Construction of Collective Identity' in David S. Meyer, Nancy Whittier and Belinda Robnett (Eds.), *Social Movements: Identity, Culture, and the State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 174.

The feminist shift from object to subject demonstrates a questioning of authority; an inquiry into the legitimacy of the dominant, often negative, perceptions of women. Furthermore, the interrogation of authority through consciousness-raising is often necessarily confrontational, specifically seeking to eliminate the damaging mechanisms of non-contradiction by dismantling the authority of oppositions. This is evident through the example of Gail Pheterson's Feminist Alliance Project.

> The Dutch Feminist Alliance Project was carried out in order to
>
> > study and interrupt psychological processes that divide women from one another. Social divisions between women have been a primary focus of feminist scholarship, politics, and therapy for the last decade. [The Feminist Alliance Project is] one project that was designed to nurture personal change, political strength, and theoretical understanding of divisions between women.[34]

For this particular project, women were organised into groups to address 'the racism, anti-Semitism, and heterosexism that divide women.'[35] Although consciousness-raising can be used to raise awareness of various issues, for the Feminist Alliance Project, it was specifically used to engender alliances between women, by addressing how both oppression and domination are internalised. The Feminist Alliance Project demonstrates the importance of consciousness-raising to effecting change for women of colour. By focusing on the ways in which dominant and oppressed statuses are normalised, the framework of the project 'provide[s] the confrontations for which it was intended.'[36] The outcomes of the discussions caused participants to place political rather than personal significance upon notions of 'dominant' and 'oppressed' status.[37] This is not to say that participants distanced their personal experiences from socially-constructed identifications of status, but that as a result of the discussions, they were

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[34] Gail Pheterson, 'Alliances Between Women: Overcoming Internalized Oppression and Internalized Domination', *Signs* (Vol. 12, No. 1, Autumn, 1986), 146.
[35] Ibid., 147.
[36] Ibid., 159.
[37] Ibid.

able to better understand how their personal experiences were affected by 'the illusion that there were only two politicized poles…. White, straight, and ordinary images of humanity were transformed into more realistic perceptions of human diversity.'[38] As a result, the women were able to move 'from antagonism toward alliance.'[39] This was the hoped for goal of *Bridge*, but it was enacted through a transference of group dynamics to the literary arena, a move that engendered the anti-colonial, anti-hegemonic methodology of U.S. third world feminism through an interrogation of genre.

An understanding of *Bridge* as consciousness-raising demonstrates that Moraga recognises the benefits of this process. What we see through the promotion of and response to *Bridge*, however, is indicative of Moraga's inability to realise the full potential of consciousness-raising, by limiting this process to its phase of vocalising subjectivity. In the marketing material for the original publication of *Bridge* by Persephone Press, the anthology was dubbed 'the classic consciousness-raising/organizing tool for both women of color and non-colored women committed to eradicating racism within the feminist movement and society in general.'[40] Readers of the anthology have responded in a way that suggests it has helped them to legitimise their own awareness: 'The writings justified some of my thoughts telling me I had a right to feel as I did' (*Bridge*, no page number). This is a reaction reminiscent of the 'lightbulb moment' of early contributors to consciousness-raising sessions, deriving from the connections made between what one participant described as 'her personal experiences as a woman and the political analysis that developed in

[38] Ibid., 159-60.
[39] Ibid., 160.
[40] Short, 'Coming to the Table', 6.

the consciousness-raising group.'[41] Articulating their consciousness allows women of colour to 'put flesh back on the object,'[42] to paraphrase Norma Alarcón, moving women of colour towards self-identification and away from a history of objectification. This self-identification is, for Alarcón, the heterogeneous subject of *Bridge*:

> Consciousness as a site of multiple voicings is the theoretical subject, par excellence, of *Bridge*.… The need to assign multiple registers of existence is an effect of the belief that knowledge of one's subjectivity cannot be arrived at through a single "theme." Indeed the multiple-voiced subjectivity is lived in resistance to competing notions for one's allegiance or self-identification. It is a process of disidentification […] with prevalent formulations of the most forcefully theoretical subject of feminism.[43]

The raising of consciousness from and through 'multiple voicings' and social locations involves, as we have seen, this 'disidentification' from Sandoval's 'hegemonic feminism' that does not allow for 'multiple registers of existence.' Moraga's interpretation of contradiction displays disidentification through her use of U.S. third world feminist methodologies that break with hegemonic formulations of feminism. *Bridge* utilises innovative configurations of genre involving the autobiographical, to allow an inscription of subjectivity that is not dependent upon normative notions of theory. Finding a publisher for such work, however, was not an easy task (and remains a problem[44]). In response to the difficulty in having her

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[41] Nancy A. Naples, *Grassroots Warriors: Activist Mothering, Community Work, and the War on Poverty* (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 148.

[42] See Norma Alarcón, 'Chicana's Feminist Literature: A Re-vision Through Malintzin/or Malintzin: Putting Flesh Back on the Object' in Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (Eds.), *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983).

[43] Norma Alarcón, 'The Theoretical Subject(s) of *This Bridge Called My Back*, 38.

[44] As receptive as they were to Moraga's *The Last Generation*, which they published, South End Press pointed out the economic dilemma faced by small publishers of experimental work: '…we *do* appreciate "genre-bending" and we *do* value your hybridization of essays and poetry. However, I should tell you up front that South End Press is biased away from poetry because, although I hate to say it, poetry "doesn't sell".' Letter to Moraga from Karin Aguilar-San Juan, February 10, 1992. Series II (Manuscripts), Box 12, Fol. 4, Cherríe Moraga Papers, Special Collections Library, Stanford University.

experimental work published, Gertrude Stein said, 'One writes for oneself and strangers but with no adventurous publishers how can one come in contact with those same strangers.'[45] The answer, for U.S. third world feminists such as Smith and Moraga trying to bring their mixed-genre work to an audience, was to form their own publishing press adventurous enough to support forms of writing such as the autotheoretical, giving women of colour the opportunity, as Alice Walker said, 'To write the books one wants to read.'[46]

More than a coincidental combination of autobiography and theory, the autotheoretical comes in various guises and is commonly regarded as a form of resistance to restrictive modes of subjectivity. Discrimination against women of colour writers was fundamentally mirrored in discrimination against the non-normative multiplicity of this form that undermines singularity. A textual contradiction combining the seemingly incongruous modes of autobiography and theory, the autotheoretical enacts the politics of identity by questioning the authority of theory that 'evacuat[es] the very social subjects producing it'[47]; in the case of *Bridge*, the dominance of mainstream feminism that expelled marginal voices of colour. This was a physical as well as intellectual expulsion, as Barbara Smith's reveals when discussing the formation of KTP:

> The first discussions about Kitchen Table were in the fall of 1980… Audre Lorde called me and she was saying how we really needed to do something about publishing, because, we women of color writers who were feminists, we'd experienced a lot of negative things trying to get our work published, particularly in a feminist context.[48]

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[45] Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (London: Penguin, 2001), 259.
[46] Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (London: Phoenix, 2005), 8.
[47] Nancy Miller in Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical discourses: Theory, criticism, practice* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), 283.
[48] Barbara Smith, interviewed in 1991 by Kate Brandt. Kate Brandt, *Happy Endings: Lesbian Writers Talk About Their Lives and Work* (Tallahassee: The Naiad Press, Inc, 1993), 110.

The difficulty for women of colour to secure publishers for their feminist writing is perhaps better understood if we insert, 'particularly in a [hegemonic] feminist context.' Women of colour feminist writers have been marginalised for their methodological choices of genres such as the autotheoretical that do not conform to the processes of mainstream feminist theory.

The work of Alison Jaggar, Bonnie Zimmerman and others has been highlighted by proponents of U.S third world feminism, for the way in which they have critiqued writing by feminists of colour as being 'mainly at the level of description.'[49] According to Aída Hurtado, Jaggar acknowledges the failure of feminist theory to integrate race into its analysis of women's subordination, but also proclaims that women of colour have not developed 'a distinctive and comprehensive theory of women's liberation.'[50] Jaggar's proclamation seems to suggest that there should be only a single theory of women of colour liberation, but this is the very exclusivity that has caused women of colour to look to non-mainstream feminist processes and as we have seen, KTP's approach did not limit itself to publishing but also involved outreach work. Furthermore, the labelling of women of colour feminism as lacking distinctiveness is indicative of the failure to grasp the non-normative potential of reconfigured genres, a failure evident in the opinions of scholars such as Hester Eisenstein, who aligns the work of U.S. third world feminists solely with 'the special force of poetry.'[51] This emphasis on the descriptive elements of writing by U.S. third world feminists overlooks the critical purpose of autobiography in relation to the power structures of hegemonic feminism in the United States, which is to

[49] Alison Jaggar quoted in Aída Hurtado, 'Relating to Privilege: Seduction and Rejection in the Subordination of White Women and Women of Color', *Signs* (Vol. 14, No. 4, Summer, 1989), 838.
[50] Ibid.
[51] In Sandoval, 'U.S. third world feminism', 341.

convey experiential articulations that demonstrate 'signs of a lived experience of difference from white female experience in the United States.'[52] More than demonstration, the reconfiguration of theory through a rethinking of autobiography is performative, enacting a form of identity politics concerned with present and future existence as much as the historicity normally associated with autobiography.

As with consciousness-raising, feminists of colour have often deployed elements of the autobiographical to not only inscribe but also theorise subjectivity. The purpose of textualising and publishing such theorisations is to demonstrate the possibilities of performance for other women of colour, often through a sense of playfulness and fluidity that encourages women to interrogate fixedness; if theory is subject to change, then so is the subjectivity it dictates. While '…theorists of autobiography have tended to emphasise the retrospective and therefore non-immediate nature of autobiographical self-awareness,'[53] women of colour feminists have used autobiographical elements to produce what some call 'confessional narratives' that, as bell hooks argues, 'are needed as guides, as texts which affirm our fellowship with one another….'[54] Through the autotheoretical, lives are articulated with and through others, as with consciousness-raising. The content of *Bridge* attests to this, with women from various backgrounds drawing upon personal experience to contribute toward an articulation of U.S. third world feminism. This is not a dismissal of theory, as detractors of U.S. third world feminist writing seem to suggest in their emphasis on the descriptive. Instead, forms such as the autotheoretical offer 'an

[52] Ibid., 340, 341.
[53] Liz Stanley, *The auto/biographical I: The theory and practice of feminist auto/biography* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), 5.
[54] bell hooks in Marcus, 290.

alternative way of theorizing,'[55] as suggested through Barbara Christian's reconfiguration of literary theory.

Dissatisfied with the language of literary theory that she found ironically lacking in pleasure in contrast to the literature it analysed, Christian advocated for theorizing '…in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language, since dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking.'[56] This implication of aesthetic theorising, of constructing theory according to taste, is an important one, drawing attention to '…the recognition that everybody theorises about everyday life and produces analyses of it which range from the particularly crude to the particularly sophisticated….'[57] I would push Liz Stanley's contention further, to argue that perceptions of certain forms of theorising as crude or unsophisticated, can derive from an intellectual aesthetic prejudice that dismisses certain narrative forms of interrogation as 'low-brow' and provincial. Through aesthetics, such elitism can result in an oppression of subjectivities that do not conform to prescribed processes of articulation. Deconstructing such aesthetic displays of superiority, I argue that Jane Gallop's notion of 'anecdotal theory' helps us to assess the autotheoretical as a form that helpfully engenders contradiction. By highlighting the amalgamation of fiction and reality used to vocalise subjectivity, Gallop helps us to gauge the way in which methodologies such as anecdotal theory and the autotheoretical are fruitful mechanisms for their ability to uncover unexpected connections.

Anecdotal theory, explains Gallop, is the practice of recounting and reading anecdotes, what she defines as 'short account[s] of some interesting or humorous

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[55] Jane Gallop, *Anecdotal Theory* (Duke University Press: Durham and London, 2002), 1.
[56] In Ibid.
[57] Stanley, 4.

incident,' for theoretical insights.[58] This sounds simple but Gallop's justification for this practice opens up a more complex questioning of theory, and how the dangerous authority of established theory can be destabilised with humour. Drawing from Barbara Christian's work, Gallop takes a literary approach to theory, using a literary aesthetic to interrogate the real through the particular functions of the anecdote. The anecdote is, as Joel Fineman points out in his history of the form, 'directly pointed towards or rooted in the real.'[59] We regularly recount anecdotes, often embellished or adjusted for narrative effect but nevertheless relating to real-life events. As Gallop points out, even Freud, referenced by Christian as an exemplar of theorisation through language play, grounded his psychoanalytical theories in case history, 'demand[ing] that theory test itself against the uncanny details of story.'[60] The bringing together of oppositions of theory and fiction, of objective event and narrated event, through the particular use of anecdote is done so in order to utilise the tonal properties of humour with which anecdotes are associated: '"Anecdote" and "theory" carry diametrically opposed connotations: humorous vs. serious, short vs. grand, trivial vs. overarching, specific vs. general. Anecdotal theory would cut through these oppositions in order to produce theory with a better sense of humor, theorizing which honors the uncanny detail of lived experience.'[61] Perhaps unwittingly, but nonetheless helpfully, Moraga's fictional writing carries out a similar function that puts interpretations of theories of U.S. third world feminism to the test with regard to race.

In what appears to be a draft text including a female first-person narrative and script dialogue with and about a black woman, from the Moraga Papers housed at Stanford University, there is a direct allusion to the problematic interpersonal

[58] Gallop, 2.
[59] Joel Fineman in Gallop, 2-3.
[60] Gallop, 11.
[61] Ibid., 2.

dynamics of KTP: 'I feel used by KTP. Propped up[;] abused. "You're the only one" the weight of that position. The good one.'[62] Whilst it is impossible to read this excerpt as a factual account, reading it through an autotheoretical lens transforms the writing from fiction or anecdote, to a mode of theory testing itself against the dynamics of lived experience. By contextualising this writing through Moraga's comments earlier in this chapter on the state of U.S. third world feminism, the singling out of the narrator embodies and enlivens the issue of Moraga's move away from the work of cross-racial alliance.

We are now able to reconsider whether Moraga's contention that many black feminists limited their analyses of race to black-white relations, is a reflection upon her position as the first non-black member of KTP.[63] This lived experience, refracted through fiction, recontextualises the complicated workings of U.S. third world feminism that seeks to unite women from various backgrounds through a shared experience of racial oppression. Not dissimilar to the response of U.S. third world feminists to mainstream, hegemonic feminism that failed to acknowledge the diverse experiences of non-white women, Moraga's interweaving of fiction and theory highlights the continuing difficulty of acknowledging diversity. The communal experience of racial oppression is, as Moraga suggests, experienced differently amongst women of colour but relevant to this project is Moraga's shift from negotiating difference toward inscribing, rather than deconstructing, racialised subjectivities. As we will see in Chapter Five, this inscription is evident through Moraga's racialised articulations of indigeneity. To vocalise indigeneity through a

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[62] Cherríe Moraga, Untitled, Series II (Manuscripts), Box 12, Fol. 1, Cherríe Moraga Papers, Special Collections Library, Stanford University.
[63] 'Kitchen Table: Publishing for Third World Women', *Small Press: The Magazine of Independent Publishing*, Jan/Feb 1985, 28. Series IV (Correspondence: Business), Box 4, Fol. 31, Cherríe Moraga Papers, Special Collections Library, Stanford University.

framework of race, Moraga distances herself from discussions of race that acknowledge the black-white paradigm, at the expense of the potential political creativity formed through U.S. third world feminist networks.

The black-white paradigm of race relations in the United States is one that black women, indeed all Americans, would have to engage with in order to deconstruct, being a framework that has informed the cultural experiences of Americans in various ways, and Moraga's conception of this engagement as anathema to a project dedicated to establishing the heterogeneity of women of colour, demonstrates both the difficulty and purpose of dialogue where participants are found to be linked through seemingly unfamiliar experiences. It may have been the case, as Moraga implies, that certain black feminists have perpetuated rather than interrogated a black-white version of race relations, but these, I would argue, are exactly the people with whom dialogue should continue in order to debunk the constructions of race that affect us all. Instead, Moraga's decision to move away from cross-racial feminism of the 1980s and increase her political focus on Chicana identity, whilst perhaps justified at the time due to internal group discord, remains unchanged, perpetuating the unhelpful practice of non-contradictory political spaces through the fourth phase of Chela Sandoval's hegemonic model of feminism that categorises women as a racially divided class. As Sandoval argues above, such categorisation prescribes the oppositional spaces afforded to the women's movement, limiting the political tools of feminists to the very proscription they wish to overturn. I suggest that instead, what are needed are unpredictable, risky methodological forms, offering us the unexpected 'lightbulb' moments of consciousness-raising and the autotheoretical that continually test our theorisations against our communal actions: the differential consciousness of the ironic cyborg.

Cybernetic blasphemy: imagining a contradictory consciousness of oppositional space

Using Donna Haraway's political myth of the cyborg and Chela Sandoval's notion of differential consciousness, I will outline the generative political possibilities overlooked by Moraga, of incorporating contradiction into a U.S. third world feminist politic. The methodologies of Haraway and Sandoval better support my contention that Moraga's move away from cross-racial feminist alliance is owing to an interpretation of feminism that desires to inscribe rather than dismantle, totalising subjectivities. Conversely, Sandoval's differential consciousness and Haraway's cyborg offer viable political alternatives to what I regard as the racial limitations of Moraga's feminism, limitations that are maintained through a denial of contradiction. Returning to the politics of Gloria Anzaldúa and Moraga's post-*Bridge* publications that reformulated the anthologies, it will become apparent that the transformative capability of conflict generated by inconsistency is bypassed by Moraga.

A tool of U.S. third world feminism, Chela Sandoval's concept of differential consciousness enables an acknowledgment of contradiction in order to address the exclusionary systems of hegemonic feminism. The metastructure of hegemonic feminism earlier described by Sandoval arises, argues Chandra Mohanty, from, '…assumptions of privilege and ethnocentric universality […] and inadequate self-consciousness about the effects of Western scholarship on the Third World in the context of a world system dominated by the West, [which] characterize a sizable extent of Western feminist work on women in the Third World.'[64] This exclusionary logic, Sandoval argues, can be understood by utilising Louis Althusser's ideas set out

[64] Chandra Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders*, 19.

in 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', where it is argued that all citizens act, even in resistance, in order to sustain and reinforce the dominant social order, thus carving out a place as a 'citizen-subject'.[65] The purpose of Sandoval utilising such a standpoint is not to vilify predominant depictions of feminism but to help address internal divisions within all oppositional movements that have fractured over ideological differences, whereby similar but different groups have been excluded through an ideological struggle for the status of citizen-subject.[66]

A political alternative to the struggle over citizen-subjecthood, differential consciousness is the 'enabling theory', the 'method' of U.S. third world feminism[67] that has the potential to negotiate varying ideological positions within feminism, rather than allow these positions to fracture the women's movement where 'each of these sites tend to generate sets of tactics, strategies, and identities which historically have appeared to be mutually exclusive under modernist oppositional practices.'[68] Differential consciousness 'enables movement "between and among" the […] modes of oppositional consciousness considered as variables, in order to disclose the distinctions among them.'[69] This mobility is the 'kinetic'[70] aspect of differential consciousness that is tactical, yet avoids the strictures of mutually exclusive categorisations of hegemonic feminism. Working across difference, and the ability and necessity of doing so, demonstrates the falsity inherent in hierarchies of difference. Significantly, the mobility of differential consciousness not only applies to movement between ideological practices but also to registers of power, where the goal of achieving total power is replaced with recognising the utility of partial and mutable

[65] Sandoval, 'U.S. third world feminism,' 339.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid., 345.
[68] Ibid., 346.
[69] Ibid., 347.
[70] Ibid., 339.

power. This is the suggestion of the cyborg, in many ways a counterpart of Sandoval's differential consciousness.

Through Donna Haraway's cyborg, the transgressive humour of the autotheoretical resurfaces to highlight the generative political potential of contradiction that is denied by Moraga's continuing inscription of race. Referencing the poetry of Adrienne Rich, Donna Haraway's 'Manifesto for Cyborgs' is, as the essay's subtitle states, 'an ironic dream of a common language for women in the integrated circuit.'[71] Like Sandoval, Haraway's dream is to imagine a language or political method capable of correcting the schisms within feminism that paradoxically arise from misguided attempts at unity:

> Painful fragmentation among feminists (not to mention among women) along every possible fault line has made the concept of woman elusive, an excuse for the matrix of women's dominations of each other…. [T]he sources of a crisis in political identity are legion. The recent history for much of the U.S. Left and the U.S. feminism has been a response to this kind of crisis by endless splitting and searches for a new essential unity.[72]

In their explorations of the contradictory dynamics of community, Sandoval and Haraway suggest the necessity of new interpretations of 'unity.' For Haraway, unity does not necessarily connote similarity but instead, suggests 'coalition – affinity, not identity'; 'united front politics, but without the vanguard party.'[73] As we have seen from responses to mainstream feminism, the notion of a singular concept of woman is a fiction, meaning that attempts to unify around this concept are flawed from the outset. What is needed instead to combat such reductive notions of 'woman' whilst simultaneously working to overturn gender oppression, is a recognition and utilisation of these societal fictions, which is where the cyborg comes into play.

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[71] Donna Haraway, 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs', 190.
[72] Ibid., 197.
[73] Ibid., 197, 193.

The political potential of the cyborg emanates from its playful and creative response to restrictive dualisms. As both machine and organism – man-made construction and biological life-form – the cyborg is 'a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction' and thus critically highlights the way in which the lived social relations of social reality, 'our most important political construction,' is 'a world-changing fiction.'[74] Vital to 'structuring any possibility of historical transformation,' is the cyborg's creative impetus to encourage, rather than deny, the 'fruitful couplings' of supposedly oppositional elements of 'social and bodily reality'.[75] As suggested earlier through Jane Gallop's anecdotal theory that is no doubt influenced by the methodology of Haraway's cyborg, the humour of irony is key to establishing the existence and utility of contradiction: 'Irony is about contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes, even dialectically, about the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true. Irony is about humor and play. It is also a rhetorical strategy and a political method.'[76] The purpose of cyborg imagery cognizant of contradiction is to, 'suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves,'[77] through a blasphemous interrogation of singularity.

Through subversive religious imagery, Haraway uses the idea of blasphemy to interrogate the consecration of singularity through dualisms. The boundary-defying cyborg myth is 'perhaps more faithful as blasphemy is faithful, than as reverent worship and identification…. Blasphemy protects one from the Moral Majority within, while still insisting on the need for community. Blasphemy is not apostasy.'[78]

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[74] Ibid., 191.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., 190.
[77] Ibid., 223.
[78] Ibid., 190.

Like the Chicanas labelled *malinchistas* for questioning the patriarchy of Chicano nationalism, and proponents of identity politics labelled as traitors of the Leftist cause (see Chapter One), the cyborg's blasphemy is not a disavowal of political cause but a faith in political cause that engenders a continual self-critique rather than blind loyalty. Identification with a singular cause or singular structure may be easier and safer, owing to the value associated with totality, but it does not account for the daily socio-political existence of contradiction, without which we would not have a party political system. Identification with singularity is also political death, which Haraway deftly draws out through her paradoxical interpretation of static reproduction:

> I would suggest that cyborgs have more to do with regeneration and are suspicious of the reproductive matrix and of most birthing. For salamanders, regeneration after injury, such as the loss of a limb, involves regrowth of structure and restoration of function with the constant possibility of twinning or other odd topographical productions at the site of former injury. The regrown limb can be monstrous, duplicated, potent. We have all been injured, profoundly. We require regeneration, not rebirth….[79]

Rebirth is, politically speaking, a potential duplication of existing structures regardless of their efficacy. Regeneration, on the other hand, is the 'suspicious', curious activity of differential consciousness that considers the political productivity of relations not 'on the basis of natural identification, but only on the basis of conscious coalition, of affinity, of political kinship.'[80] In continual motion, regeneration discourages permanence – even the permanence of political kinship – reflecting the expectation that like our heterogeneous selves, power is, and should only ever be at most, partial. The promotion of partiality is not political acquiescence. Rather, partiality

> … has consequences for our expectations of forms of political organization and participation. We do not need a totality in order to work well. The feminist dream of a common language, like all dreams for a perfectly true language, of a perfectly faithful

[79] Ibid., 223.
[80] Ibid., 198.

> naming of experience, is a totalizing and imperialist one…. The issue is dispersion. The task is to survive in diaspora.[81]

Fittingly, this diasporic approach is one that Haraway recognises in the work of Sandoval's oppositional consciousness, a recognition that is ironically overlooked by U.S. third world feminists such as Moraga in favour of a mistaken alignment to singular notions of identity.

Haraway correctly identifies the way in which Sandoval's differential, oppositional consciousness 'is about contradictory locations and heterochronic calendars, not about relativisms and pluralisms.'[82] However, as Sandoval argues, U.S. third world feminist criticism conflates the oppositional methodology of moving between and across divergent ideologies, with a demographic:

> The textual problem that becomes a philosophical problem, indeed, a political problem, is the conflation of U.S. third world feminism as a theory and method of oppositional consciousness with the demographic or "descriptive" and generalized category "woman of color," thus depoliticizing and repressing the specificity of the politics and forms of consciousness developed by U.S. women of color, feminists of color, and erasing the specificity of what is a particular *form* of these: U.S. third world feminism.[83]

I argue that one aspect of this depoliticisation found in the work of Moraga is a continuing entrenchment, rather than interrogation, of subjectivity. While Moraga manifests certain cybernetic politics in her 'blasphemous' exploration of patriarchal Chicano nationalism, this is a blasphemy that remains within the limits of nationalism through a narrowing of focus upon Chicanismo. Although there is political affinity with U.S. third world feminists in the goal to recognise and overturn the ways in which these women are excluded from society on the combined basis of their gender, class and race, Moraga's project of inscribing Chicano identity conflates common

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[81] Ibid., 215, 212.
[82] Ibid., 197.
[83] Chela Sandoval, 'Cyborg Feminism and the Methodology of the Oppressed' in Chris Hables Gray (Ed.), *The Cyborg Handbook* (Routledge: New York & London, 1995), 414.

cause with common identity, compelling Moraga to move away from the differential political arena of U.S. third world feminism. Despite the goal to inscribe the heterogeneity of women of colour, Moraga's failure to utilise political methodologies of differential consciousness – methodologies that acknowledge contradiction – demonstrates the pervasiveness of singularity. The missed generative possibilities of acknowledging contradiction are made evident in the follow-up publications to *Bridge* that mark a significant political divergence between Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa.

Both Moraga and Anzaldúa's revisions of the *Bridge* anthology offer a helpful insight into the progression of their U.S. third world feminist methodologies. Moraga collaborated with Ana Castillo to translate *Bridge* into Spanish, encouraging a Latina readership beyond the United States. *Esta Puente, mi espalda* also contributes to the debate around identity politics in the United States through a recognition of English-Spanish bilingualism, whilst also bringing the politics of U.S. third world feminism to a wider U.S. audience. Fourteen years later, Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating edited *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*. As we have seen above, Moraga's response to this anthology is not entirely positive, questioning the appropriateness of including gay men and white women in an anthology deriving from a U.S. third world feminist methodology. But here, I argue, is where Moraga betrays her conflation of common identity with common political cause, and Anzaldúa provides an example of how a continuing practice of differential consciousness might appear. Although Moraga sees the necessity of attempts to 'effectively move beyond the racial categories and strategies of political resistance and identity politics,' she does not see this shift occurring through the inclusion of white women and men, even though this inclusion is an ongoing process of dialogue, or conflict, as Anzaldúa calls it, intended to bring about change: 'Conflict, with its

fiery nature, can trigger transformation depending on how we respond to it. Often, delving deeply into conflict instead of fleeing from it can bring an understanding (conocimiento) that will turn things around.'[84] The writing in *This Bridge We Call Home* is not the final word, but a progression of the workings of U.S. third world feminism that engenders dialogue between differential voices in a recognition of partial and intersecting identities:

> Twenty-one years ago we struggled with the recognition of difference within the context of commonality. Today we grapple with the recognition of commonality within the context of difference. While *This Bridge Called My Back* displaced whiteness, *this bridge we call home* carries this displacement further. It questions the terms white and women of color by showing that whiteness may not be applied to all whites, as some possess women-of-color consciousness, just as some women of color bear white consciousness. This book intends to change notions of identity, viewing it as part of a more complex system covering a larger terrain, and demonstrating that the politics of exclusion based on traditional categories diminishes our humanness.[85]

Like Sandoval, Anzaldúa differentiates between a U.S. third world feminist demographic and a U.S. third world feminist methodology, allowing the difficult work of community building and mending to take place between allegedly disparate groups. This is not dissimilar to Rosalind Brunt's assessment of the dialogic contribution of feminism to a politics of identity, 'a sense of how 'I' and 'you' and 'she' and 'he' could potentially, often with great difficulty and in most hostile circumstances, link up to 'we.'[86] Unable to articulate the contradictory 'we', Moraga disengages from cross-racial feminist alliance, overlooking the opportunity to explore the relations between the black-white paradigm and her articulation of Chicana subjectivity.

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[84] Gloria Anzaldúa, Preface, Gloria E. Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating (Eds.), *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 4.
[85] Ibid., 2.
[86] Rosalind Brunt, 'The Politics of Identity' in Stuart Hall & Martin Jacques (Eds.), *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s* (Lawrence & Wishart: London, 1989), 154-155.

Conclusions

I have maintained in this chapter that through the communal dynamics of Kitchen Table Press, Moraga developed her project of identity politics, seeking to overcome social injustice by enlivening the politicisation of women of colour through an acknowledgment of collectively formed subjectivities. The dialogic principles of KTP's staff and production emanated from the difficult practice of consciousness-raising, which raises awareness of critical issues and encourages participants and readers to interrogate their own and others' role in these issues. Methods such as the autotheoretical transferred the spoken word of consciousness-raising to the written word, drawing connections between theoretical insights and lived experiences in an extension of the notion that the personal is political. These self-reflective processes were the purpose and method of *This Bridge Called My Back*, a KTP production, situating the publishing group as a literary form of political alliance. At the core of this alliance was the anticolonial project of U.S. third world feminism, which sought to highlight how women of colour, although separated by variations of race, gender and class, were connected through their experience of racial oppression. It was hoped that this greater unity would not only intensify efforts to dismantle racism, but also interrogate the machinations of hegemonic feminism that failed to account for the political needs of women of colour. Such a polyvocal project was not, however, guaranteed to be a harmonious one.

The hopeful sisterhood forged by Moraga and Barbara Smith in this chapter's epigraph comes to an end with Moraga's move away from cross-racial feminist alliance. Moraga declares that this shift is in part a result of too great a focus from black feminists on the black-white paradigm of race relations, which fails to account for the history of non-black women of colour in the United States. While I agree that

there is an important case to be made for a greater reconsideration of Latina, Asian, and indigenous histories of women in the United States, this chapter has argued that Moraga's critique conflates political cause with identity, mistakenly aligning the political basis of 'women of colour' with an inscription of subjectivities. In moving away from cross-racial feminism to concentrate her politics on inscribing Chicana subjectivity, including an increasing (and troubling) focus on indigeneity that will be explored in Chapter Five, Moraga does not remove herself from the binaries of race. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, Moraga struggles to articulate Mexican American identity in the face of the black-white paradigm, resulting in an attempted entrenchment of singularity through the machinations of race in a conflation of race and ethnicity. Rather than interrogate the systemic inability of racial structures to accommodate heterogeneity, Moraga perpetuates a denial of contradiction in forming her explorations of Chicana race (and ethnicity) in isolation from other women of colour.

This chapter argued that a productive alternative overlooked by this political isolation is the contradiction foregrounded through differential approaches to heterogeneous constituencies. The differential consciousness of Chela Sandoval, coupled with the cybernetic structures of Donna Haraway, afford an approach to reconciling diverse activists aligned to the same political cause. Sandoval's oppositional consciousness draws out the difference between political identity and political cause, utilising a 'differential consciousness' that investigates, rather than dismisses, such ideological differences. Haraway's cyborg combines man-made and organic elements in a challenge to the false dualisms that prevent adaptation to changing political requirements; the cyborg eschews essentialism for political affinities. There may be different approaches to, and ideologies around, abolishing

racism against women of colour, but this chapter has contended that these can be negotiated, requiring the dialogic, differential compromise of the cyborg. A compromise of Moraga's political approach would have been to reconsider the black-white paradigm not in relation to black women alone, but in relation to non-black women of colour, and the following chapter will demonstrate the benefits of such an approach. In the words of Gloria Anzaldúa, a differential compromise around racial politics involving varied constituents does not, '… attempt to restore the privilege of white writers, scholars, and activists; it is a refusal to continue walking the color line.'[87]

[87] Anzaldúa, *This Bridge We Call Home*, 4.

Chapter Four

The black-white paradigm of U.S. race relations: a *pesadilla* of non-contradiction

Esta es la historia de una pesadilla.
Y de su comprensión y superación por medio del arte.
Todos hemos vivido, hemos visto vivir, hemos soñado esta pesadilla.
No todos hemos sabido superarla.

[This is the story of a nightmare.
And of its understanding and overcoming through art.
We have all lived, have seen live, have dreamed this nightmare.
Not all of us have known how to overcome it.]
Ariel Dorfman[1]

Sometimes a breakdown can be the beginning of a breakthrough.
Cherríe Moraga[2]

We might interpret Moraga's move away from a framework of dualistic black-white race relations, discussed in the previous chapter, as an attempt to develop her identity politics of inscribing Chicana subjectivity away from a conceptual framework of non-contradiction that denies heterogeneity. This chapter will demonstrate, however, that the black-white paradigm of race relations continues to inform Moraga's politics beyond her cross-racial alliance work. Through an investigation of Moraga's short story, 'Pesadilla', it is evident that the articulation of Chicana subjectivity continues to be constrained by a logic of Aristotelian non-contradiction, whereby racial identity is polarised as either black or white, and alternatives are denied. The protagonist of the story, Cecilia, struggles to situate herself as a brown woman, in the face of a racial discourse segregated between black and white. But with Cecilia's attempt to articulate her 'brownness' lies my concern over Moraga's project to inscribe Chicana

[1] From Ariel Dorfman's *El absurdo entre cuatro paredes.* Translated by Sophia A. McClennen in her article, 'The Diasporic Subject in Ariel Dorfman's *Heading South, Looking North*', *MELUS* (Vol. 30, No.1, Spring, 2005): 169.
[2] Moraga, *Loving in the War Years,* 115.

subjectivity. Informed by a historical consciousness of racial oppression through the teachings of Chicano nationalism, Chicana identity is not based upon racial markers alone, yet Moraga's explorations of identity often reinforce existing concepts of race, as opposed to a dialogue around racism. I argue in this chapter that this articulation of race is not necessarily deliberate, but formed as a result of the entrenchment of Aristotelian non-contradiction, highlighting the deep-seated mechanisms of racial definitions that subsume ethnicity. It is this subconscious enactment of the black-white paradigm that encourages this chapter's methodological use of fiction.

To demonstrate the ways in which the black-white paradigm continues to inform Moraga's politics, this chapter will, in the same spirit of contradiction, utilise fiction in order to demonstrate the effects of Moraga's non-contradictory identity politics at an interpersonal level. 'Pesadilla' is more than a singular entity, an example of the harmful effects of the black-white binary: 'Pesadilla' also enacts the process of consciousness-raising discussed in the last chapter, in a manner that encourages us to consider innovative ways in which to approach Moraga's oeuvre. The story creates a space for the subject of contradiction, despite the didacticism of Moraga's racial politics. This space is created through a combination of fact and fiction, in an enactment of U.S. third world feminist methodologies that uses artistic innovation to uncover and address societal injustice.

Following an outline of race and non-contradiction in 'Pesadilla', this chapter will explore the implications of the black-white paradigm through critical race theory, in order to outline the importance of this framework to discussions around race and racism in the United States. Although Moraga's move away from cross-racial feminist alliance implies that race should not always be approached through the black-white paradigm due to its exclusion of non-black people of colour, issues arising from

critical race theory demonstrate that the binaries of race structurally affect us all, including relations between people of colour. This problematises Moraga's justification for her move away from cross-racial feminist alliance, as does the portrayal of a black and Latina lesbian couple in 'Pesadilla' that draws our attention to the damaging effects of the black-white binary upon interracial relationships. By reading 'Pesadilla' as a form of consciousness-raising, an act that is encouraged by the text's combination of fiction and lived experience involving two members of the cross-racial feminist alliance, Kitchen Table Press, it is possible to enact a dialogue across literary oeuvres on the subject of the black-white paradigm. This dialogue resumes, albeit in a different form, the work of differential consciousness set aside by Moraga in her dissatisfaction with U.S. cross-racial feminism. I will argue finally that this turn to fiction is necessary, especially the use of the short story form, in exploring the difficult subject of an entrenched black-white paradigm, which only the safety of invention can begin to address.

'Pesadilla' opens and closes with the spectre of race as its protagonist, Cecilia, is confronted by the non-contradiction of a black-white racial binary that provokes an interrogation of her Latina identity. Originally published in *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas*,[3] 'Pesadilla' is one of the collected pieces in *Loving in the War Years* and depicts an interracial couple, Deborah and Cecilia, who have recently moved into and are refurbishing a Brooklyn apartment. During their first break in weeks, Deborah and Cecilia take the afternoon off, only to return to a vandalised apartment where the bedroom has been defaced with sexually violent and homophobic graffiti through which the vandal makes it known that like Deborah, he is black.

[3] Alma Gómez, Cherríe Moraga and Mariana Romo-Carmona (Eds.), *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas* (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983).

Following the attack, the couple take a break from the city to stay with friends near the Hudson. In this more peaceful setting, Cecilia has time to reflect on the attack, which becomes a reflection upon Cecilia's interracial relationship with Deborah, heralded by the opening line of the story: '*There came the day when Cecilia began to think about color*' (*LWY*, 30). Significantly, Cecilia's consideration of the implications of having a black lover takes place alongside a comparative evaluation of her previous white lovers, resulting in a polarisation of her white and black lovers through the value or negation attached to each. Neither black nor white, her skin '*like a casing, a beige bag into which the guts of her life were poured*' (*LWY*, 30), Cecilia struggles to articulate the 'color' of her own lesbianism, as the dualistic consideration of the value attached to her black and white lovers leaves little space for the 'brownness' of Cecilia's Mexican heritage that has informed her desire for women. This struggle is embodied in a figure from Mexican folklore, whose presence cannot be accommodated in the black-white dualism of race relations.

Early on in the story we learn about the Brooklyn apartment's previous tenant, a woman with five dogs and five children, referred to as 'La Loca' (the crazy woman), a trope that reappears at the end of the story in the guise of *La Llorona* (the crazed weeping woman). By the end of the story, Cecilia has physically pushed Deborah away. The final image of the story transposes Cecilia's physical distancing of Deborah to a psychological distance, where in an imagined or dreamed scenario, Deborah has been locked out of the apartment and her lover refuses to let her in. The *pesadilla*, who began the story as the monster/vandal, is now crouched on the fire escape, ready to attack, when Cecilia suddenly realises that the figure is in fact Deborah: '*The dark woman looking in through the glass is as frightened as I am. She is weeping. I will not let her in*' (*LWY*, 37). Fear, present in both partners, has finally

destroyed the relationship. In a modern twist, 'La Loca' has been locked out, transformed into *La Llorona,* who laments the loss of her loved ones and is condemned to an eternity of wandering. In the following exploration of the black-white paradigm, it will become evident that La Llorona's wandering signifies the dialectical stasis of racial construction in the United States, where citizens who are neither black nor white are excluded from the non-contradiction of dualistically structured race.

U.S. race relations of non-contradiction: the black-white paradigm

The black-white paradigm refers to the way in which, 'In the United States, the black/white color line has historically been rigidly defined and enforced. White is seen as a "pure" category. Any racial intermixture makes one "nonwhite".'[4] In this sense, the colour line divides white from non-white, where non-white can refer to any number of racial differentiations. The polarisation between white and black, as opposed to white and other non-black races, stems from the particular history of the United States that called for pseudoscientific justifications for the practices of slavery and colonisation:

> When European explorers in the New World "discovered" people who looked different than themselves, these "natives" challenged then existing conceptions of the origins of the human species, and raised disturbing questions as to whether all could be considered in the same "family of man." […] The expropriation of property, the denial of political rights, the introduction of slavery and other forms of coercive labour, as well as outright extermination, all presupposed a worldview which distinguished Europeans – children of God, human beings, etc. – from "others." Such a worldview was needed to explain why some should be "free" and others enslaved, why some had rights to land and property while others did not. Race, and the interpretation of racial differences, was a central factor in that worldview.[5]

[4] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States From the 1960s to the 1980s* (Routledge: New York and London, 1986), 60.
[5] Ibid., 58.

Here, Michael Omi and Howard Winant correctly reference the indigenous peoples inhabiting the Americas before the arrival of European colonists and African slaves, yet as with the Aristotelian conception of truth and falsity, the black-white paradigm leaves no room for contradiction. Instead, the black-white paradigm posits a dualistic relation between value-laden 'white' and its negation, black 'other'. Faced with this stark binary, Moraga's identity politics lack a sufficient vocabulary with which to articulate her Chicana subjectivity that is neither black nor white. This is the dilemma raised in the short story 'Pesadilla', where Cecilia's Latina identity is marginalised by a growing awareness of dualistic racial formation, demonstrating the societal entrenchment of non-contradiction. This issue of marginalisation is developed in the story through Cecilia's racialised consideration of her lesbianism.

'Pesadilla' displays a growing awareness of race, and the connotations of 'blackness', from a Latina perspective. The spelling out by the vandal of his and Deborah's race, and her sexuality – 'I'M BLACK YOU MOTHERFUCKER BITCH / YOU BUTCH' (*LWY*, 32) – leads Cecilia to question whether she is able to continue the relationship: 'It was the first time in their life together that Cecilia wondered if she were up to the task of such loving' (*LWY*, 32). The 'task' alludes to loving at the risk of violence – 'SUCK MY DICK YOU HOLE' (*LWY*, 32) – violence specifically targeted at a black lesbian. This threat of violence begins to manifest itself in an internalisation of unease that is aligned to Deborah's skin colour:

> Dee grew blacker as she slept on the deck. And when Cecilia rose to refill her glass it took the greatest rigidity of spine not to bend down and kiss the wet and glistening neck of the woman stretched out before her, sound asleep.
> Cecilia wanted her. She was afraid to want her. (*LWY*, 32-3)

This unease, and the increasing fear Cecilia feels with regard to her desire for Deborah, is partly clarified through the story's juxtaposition of black and white.

Cecilia's Latina perspective is troubled by the black-white paradigm that complicates her response to Deborah. This paradigm is present in 'Pesadilla' through Cecilia's reminiscences of previous white lovers. With these reminiscences comes an aura of safety, bound by notions of race and class. These memories act as a response to Cecilia's burgeoning consideration of colour and the perceived danger embodied by the blackness of her lover's skin, the first articulation of whiteness coming directly after Cecilia stops herself from kissing Deborah, in the above passage. As Cecilia closes the door behind her, where Deborah sleeps on the deck in the humid outdoors, she equates the coolness of indoors with the smell and light of Berkeley, California, and begins to wonder what it is about these sensual elements that makes her feel calm. The answer is whiteness:

> *It was … white.*
> *It was whiteness and … safety.*
>
> Old lovers who carried their whiteness like freedom/ and breath/ and light. Their shoulders, always straight-backed and sweetly oiled for color. In their faces, the luxury of trust.
>
> It was whiteness and money.
>
> In this way, she had learned to be a lesbian. (*LWY*, 33)

The reference to Berkeley not only connotes an academic education but also the way in which Cecilia has 'learned to be a lesbian.' Before Deborah, Cecilia's experience of lesbianism has been predominantly white, coupled with the economic security that her white lovers evoked through being 'middle class "college girls"' with 'the ambience of money' (*LWY*, 34).

There is a patriarchal grounding to these relationships with white women, as Cecilia remembers '…some other presence living amongst those women. Some white man somewhere…. The man's threatening and benevolent presence living with them all. They were his daughters after all, these white lesbian lovers […], as long as they

remained without a man' (*LWY*, 34). Given the story's focus on race, the depiction of this male figure acting as a safety net is uncomfortably akin to a white master who offers a semblance of violent order, and even heteronormativity – the form of whiteness that acts as the foundation of Cecilia's desire for women is inseparable from a patriarchy that espouses the need for a dominant male figure (a patriarchy also found, of course, in the Chicano Movement). The treatment of whiteness in 'Pesadilla', and this white patriarchal figure, inform Cecilia's struggle to support her black lover. Cecilia is torn between acknowledging her love for a black woman (and acknowledging the race of her lover) and choosing lovers who offer societal status through their connection to dominant structures. Cecilia chooses 'whiteness', a choice contextualised through Moraga's autobiographical essay, 'La Güera'.

Also appearing in *Loving in the War Years*, 'La Güera' explores Moraga's experience of being fair-skinned, informing our understanding of 'whiteness' in 'Pesadilla'. Acting as a postscript to 'Pesadilla', 'La Güera' contextualises the misgivings present in Cecilia's depiction of her attraction to previous white lovers. In 'La Güera', Moraga declares:

> I was educated; but more than this, I was "la güera" – fair skinned. Born with the features of my Chicana mother, but the skin of my Anglo father, I had it made.
>
> No one ever quite told me this (that light was right), but I knew that being light was something valued in my family, who were all Chicano, with the exception of my father. In fact, everything about my upbringing, at least what occurred on a conscious level, attempted to bleach me of what color I did have. (*LWY*, 43)[6]

This 'bleaching' is not, however, about race alone, as we learn that Moraga's mother chose not to teach her children Spanish (see Chapter Two), and sent Moraga to a predominately white private college in the hope that this would increase the chances

[6] 'That light was right' is also mirrored in the schoolyard rhyme experienced by a young Richard Rodriguez: '*If you're white, you're all right; / If you're brown, stick around; If you're black, stand back*.' Richard Rodriguez, *Brown: The Last Discovery of America* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 4.

of social elevation: 'It was through my mother's desire to protect her children from poverty and illiteracy that we became "anglocized"; the more effectively we could pass in the white world, the better guaranteed our future' (*LWY*, 43). Social betterment is infused with the mechanics of race, which privileges lighter skin and ideas of 'success' (both social and economic) associated with it. Of interest to this chapter is the way in which this assimilation and social elevation is intertwined with the privileging of lighter skin, internalising a conflation of race and ethnicity:

> '… it is frightening to acknowledge that I have internalized a racism and classism, where the object of oppression is not only someone *outside* my skin, but someone *inside* my skin. In fact, to a large degree, the real battle with such oppression, for all of us, begins under the skin. I have had to confront the fact that much of what I value about being Chicana, about my family, has been subverted by anglo culture and my own cooperation with it. (*LWY*, 46)

This is, I argue, a cooperation with the black-white paradigm, which has subverted articulations of culture and ethnicity by subsuming them into a racial dialectic. Faced with a dominant and delimiting discourse of race, Cecilia's cultural heritage is inarticulately housed in '*a casing, a beige bag into which the guts of her life were poured,*' encouraging an alignment to racial markers that engender assimilation to 'whiteness'. An exploration of critical race theory's response to the black-white paradigm will demonstrate that despite the falsity of 'race', the paradigm continues to affect cross-racial relations between people of colour such as Cecilia and Deborah. In a continuation of what Albert Memmi called 'the pyramid of petty tyrants', by which he referred to colonised peoples who, 'each one, being socially oppressed by one more powerful than he, always finds a less powerful one on whom to lean, and becomes a tyrant in his turn,'[7] Cecilia leans toward the privilege of whiteness. Until

[7] Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (London: Earthscan Publications, 1990), 83.

there is a deconstruction of the racial model that affords this privilege, both Cecilia and Deborah, and the prospect of cross-racial alliance, will remain subjugated.

By exploring the issue of the black-white paradigm through critical race theory, we are able to situate the issues raised through the fictional work of Moraga within a larger discourse on social justice. Considering 'Pesadilla' in light of critical, interpersonal issues of race also positions the story as a tool of consciousness-raising, linking the deeply personal lived experience of interracial tension to the political arena of race legislation. Developing the exploration of Moraga's disdain for the focus of black U.S. third world feminists upon the black-white paradigm in the previous chapter, the interracial relations of 'Pesadilla' between a black and Latina couple offers an opportunity to address the impact of a black-white dualism upon a Latina who is neither black nor white but fails to understand how this dualism affects her own identity politics and her relationship to black women. In other words, for the Latina interested in cross-racial feminist alliance, it is necessary to explore the effects of the black-white paradigm upon black-brown relations.

Cornel West claimed in the late 1990s that 'Black-brown relations will continue to pose a major challenge for American race matters in the next century.'[8] This sentiment has been mirrored in Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Theory by scholars such as George Martínez, who articulates this tension as a political power struggle between minority groups: 'Latinos will soon become the largest minority group in the United States. African-Americans may therefore be about to give up political clout to Latinos. This prospect has generated tension between African-

[8] Jorge Klor de Alva, Earl Shorris, Cornel West, 'On Black-Brown Relations' in Cornel West, *The Cornel West Reader* (New York: Basic *Civitas* Books, 1999), 499.

Americans and Latinos.'[9] Earl Shorris attributes this tension to an economic struggle over jobs, goaded by fears over immigration and underpinned by 'the advantage to the people in power of keeping those at the bottom at each other's throats…. So we have black and browns, for the most part, at the bottom. And they are frequently at each other's throats.'[10] I argue that a more entrenched, underlying cause of this conflict between black and Latino identities, however, reflected in 'Pesadilla', is the black-white paradigmatic construction of race in the United States that has often aligned Latinos with an Anglo identity through legally sanctioned terminology such as 'Hispanic'. This delimiting perpetuation of the binary structure of race creates division not only between white and non-white but also between people of colour, forming obstacles to political cohesion in the face of racial oppression that affects black and Latino communities.[11]

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[9] George A. Martínez, 'African-Americans, Latinos, and the Construction of Race: Toward an Epistemic Coalition,' *Chicano-Latino Law Review* (Vol. 19: 213, 1998), 213. See also Frank del Olmo, who argues that Mexican American activists were willing to adopt the term Hispanic because they 'saw themselves as competing with African Americans for government services and jobs under antipoverty and affirmative action programs' and found the amalgamation of diverse identities appealing, 'simply because it increased their numbers, and presumably, their clout.' Frank del Olmo quoted in Gregory Rodriguez, *Mongrels, Bastards, Orphans, and Vagabonds: Mexican Immigration and the Future of Race in America* (New York: Pantheon, 2007), 228.

[10] Klor de Alva *et al*., 511.

[11] This racial structure also fails to incorporate black Latinos into the discussion, who I would argue have often been neglected, and racially denigrated, by lighter-skinned Latino peoples as well as non-Latinos. In her discussion of Jean-Michel Basquiat, Frances Negrón-Muntaner argues that 'black artists – with the notable exception of musicians – are often construed as outside the pale of Latin/o American artistic production.' Frances Negrón-Muntaner, 'The Writing on the Wall: The Life and Passion of Jean-Michel Basquiat' in Claudio Iván Remeseira (Ed.), *Hispanic New York: A Sourcebook* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 429. Equally, contemporary and older fictional texts attest to the racism of lighter-skinned Latinos against their darker compatriots, as in Mario Vargas Llosa's *The Feast of the Goat* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), chronicling Trujillo's dictatorship in the Dominican Republic and María Amparo Ruiz de Burton's *Who Would Have Thought It?* (New York: Penguin, 2009 [originally published in 1872]), which culminates in relief at the discovery that Lola, the heroine, is neither 'Indian or negro' but is in fact a light-skinned Spanish (white) Mexican, whose skin was painted by her Native American kidnappers to conceal her identity.

The term 'Hispanic' came about in the 1970s and was first applied to the census in 1980.[12] This term demonstrates modern federal configurations of race and ethnicity that under the aegis of civil rights, maintain a divisive impact upon minorities by, as Jorge Klor de Alva argues '…blur[ring] the differences between […] cultural groups, to construct them in such a way that they become insignificant and to fuse them into a new group called whites, which didn't exist before.'[13] The Federal Government's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) adopted Directive No.15 on 12 May, 1977, which grouped race and ethnicity into five categories: American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian or Pacific Islander; Black; Hispanic; and White.[14] Of these five groups, four were deemed racial, and one, Hispanic, was considered ethnic. The Directive states that it is preferable to collect data on race and ethnicity separately and to aid this, 'the number of White and Black persons who are Hispanic must be identifiable.'[15] Clearly, this left a great deal of manoeuvrability for 'Hispanics'. Mexican Americans, most likely to be of both Spanish and indigenous ancestries, were more inclined to identify as 'White' ('A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, North Africa, or the Middle East'[16]) rather than 'American Indian' ('A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North America, and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition'[17]) owing to the complications around tribal citizenship, and more than half of the Mexican American population continued to do so as of the 1990

[12] Omi and Winant, 75-6.
[13] Klor de Alva *et al*., 503.
[14] Directive No.15: Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting, U.S. Census Bureau, http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/race/Directive_15.html [accessed 4 October, 2011].
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

census.[18] Twenty years later, and the 'Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity' amended 'Hispanic' to 'Hispanic or Latino.'[19] It is now possible to choose more than one category, for those of mixed identities,[20] but the broad federal endorsement of 'whiteness' remains.

This modern construction of race has, argues Martínez, specifically impacted the relationship between black and Latino communities, forming a barrier to political alliances between oppressed groups.[21] Martínez cites the example of the Dallas School District, where certain African American leaders argued that because Mexican Americans are legally classified as white, they should not share the benefits achieved by black civil rights.[22] This classification, however, overlooks the fact that, 'Although white identity has been a traditional source of privilege and protection, Mexican-Americans did not receive the usual benefits of whiteness.'[23] The legal 'choice' of white identity does not prevent or address racism, as suggested through the case of *Hernandez v. State* (1951). Hernandez sought to overturn his conviction for murder, based on the grounds that Mexican Americans had been excluded from the juries, which violated due process and equal protection.[24] The court ruled against this appeal, arguing that for purposes of the Fourteenth Amendment, only two races were recognised, black and white,[25] and as Mexican Americans were classified as white

[18] David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 31.
[19] Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity, Office of Management and Budget, Federal Register Notice (October 30, 1997), http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg_1997standards [accessed 4 October, 2011].
[20] Ibid.
[21] Martínez, 'African-Americans, Latinos, and the Construction of Race', 214-15.
[22] Ibid., 215.
[23] Ibid.
[24] George A. Martinez, 'Mexican Americans and Whiteness' in Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Eds.), *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 380.
[25] Ibid.

following the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo,[26] Hernandez's right to due process had been upheld.

Cases such as *Hernandez v. State* demonstrate that a legal alignment with white identity is not a guarantee of privilege for Latinos but instead, suggests that the classification as either white or non-white depends on the advantages this has for the dominant group.[27] The appeal court's reference to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, for example, overlooks the fact that although Mexicans were allowed to be naturalized in the United States following the 1848 treaty they were, nonetheless, also divided through California state classifications that designated them as white, in order to deny indigenous and black Mexican citizens U.S. citizenship.[28] This manoeuvre manipulated and circumvented the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which stated that former Mexican citizens who now resided on land belonging to the United States, would be given the opportunity to become U.S. citizens.[29] The existing racial markers of the United States used to perpetuate a black-white paradigm continue to narrate and curtail American citizenship, through overt legislation as well as societal and individual interiorisations of this paradigm evident in the process of 'colorism', which divisively maintains the notion of white supremacy amongst communities of colour.

Cecilia's attempt to negotiate the racial division of black and white informs the argument that despite Moraga's shift from its ideological influence within cross-racial feminist alliance, the non-contradiction of the black-white paradigm continues to inform the politics of Chicana subjectivity. Although Latina, Cecilia is caught up in the stark non-contradiction of racial binaries through an enactment of 'colorism',

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[26] Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict*, (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 66.
[27] Martinez, 'Mexican Americans and Whiteness,' 382.
[28] del Castillo, 66.
[29] Ibid.

whereby the value and thus desirability of 'whiteness' encourages Cecilia to distance herself from its negation, 'blackness', personified as Deborah. 'Colorism' concerns 'the privileging of light skin tone over dark skin tone'[30] and according to Wibke Reger, involves a preference for lighter skin within racial groups:

> The phenomenon has been known under different names – color prejudices, the color complex, color consciousness. Arthur K. Spears calls it "colorstruction" – a derivation from the adjective "colorstruck" that used to denote a preference for light skin. The term most commonly used today is "colorism," coined by Alice Walker and clearly based on the "racism" from which it sprung…. Walker defines colorism as "prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their color."[31]

This intra-group dynamic has led scholars to foreground a difference between 'colour' and 'race', whereby:

> "race" is premised on the existence of distinct, bounded categories, to which individuals can be assigned based on ancestry, while skin color is premised on the existence of a continuum from light to dark. That is, skin color varies among individuals within as well as between racial categories. Thus, while racism in the United States is usually thought of as discrimination toward members of one category by members of another, colorism often takes the form of intra-category discrimination.[32]

A conception of colorism that distinguishes skin tone from race becomes problematic when we neglect the underlying racial connotations that fuel such distinction, as emphasised in Reger's summary of Alice Walker's motivation for the term. Even when claims are made to a non-racialised focus on skin tone as distinct from a focus on race, it remains difficult to separate the discrimination of colorism from the workings of racism, as argued by Evelyn Nakano Glenn who concedes that, 'Certainly, at the symbolic level, the meaning of skin color and race are inextricably

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[30] Verna M. Keith, 'A Colorstruck World: Skin Tone, Achievement, and Self-Esteem Among African American Women' in Evelyn Nakano Glenn (Ed.), *Shades of Difference: Why Skin Color Matters* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 25.
[31] Wibke Reger, *The Black Body of Literature: Colorism in American Fiction* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009), 11.
[32] Evelyn Nakano Glenn, 'The Significance of Skin Color: Transnational Divergences and Convergences' in Evelyn Nakano Glenn (Ed.), *Shades of Difference: Why Skin Color Matters* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 7.

linked, even when explicit reference to race is absent.'[33] Colorism and racism may manifest themselves differently but are at their core, systems that discriminate against darker skin colours for the purposes of social classification, what Angela Harris terms 'economies of color.' [34] This is an economy that involves not only black and white but also Latino interactions with race.

Through an analysis of various court cases in the United States involving Latino claims of colorism, legal scholarship has demonstrated the connection between racism and colorism and the oppressive effects of the black-white paradigm upon non-black people of colour:

> …what judges lose sight of when colorism cases appear in Latino multiracial contexts is the connection between color and race discrimination. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 does not provide definitions for either race or color discrimination, the EEOC [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission] as the governmental entity charged with enforcing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 treats race and color discrimination as closely intertwined. The EEOC *Compliance Manual* specifically states that although race and color are not synonymous, they do overlap such that race discrimination includes discrimination based upon a person's color.[35]

This concession by the EEOC is a helpful redress to what Tanya Katerí Hernández argues are, '…Latino conceptions of functional whiteness and blackness that are foundational to their color discrimination experiences,'[36] conceptions that are manifested in the

> …vast literature that documents the ways in which Latinos often manifest white skin preferences in their mode of self-identification and in choice of associations in ways that recall/mirror Latin American racial ideology. What this literature demonstrates, in particular, is how Latino expressions of color bias are intimately connected with assessments of phenotype, hair texture, size and shape of nose and lips, and socioeconomic class standing. Latino race labelling thus factors in considerations of

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[33] Ibid.
[34] Angela Harris, 'Economies of Color' in Evelyn Nakano Glenn (Ed.), *Shades of Difference: Why Skin Color Matters* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 1.
[35] Tanya Katerí Hernández, 'Latinos at Work: When Color Discrimination Involves More Than Color' in Evelyn Nakano Glenn (Ed.), *Shades of Difference: Why Skin Color Matters* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 242.
[36] Ibid., 239.

> bodily features other than color that are considered to be racial signifiers of denigrated African ancestry.[37]

Even outside black and white communities, 'whiteness' and 'blackness' are aligned with increased and decreased social standing, respectively. Latino expressions of colour bias are, in short, intimately connected with the black-white paradigm, 'the fundamental national binary drama'[38] of the United States. We are now able to position Cecilia's increasing detachment from her black lover within this drama, demonstrating that Moraga's desire to distance her politics from the black-white paradigm not only overlooks its effect upon Latinos, but also its effect upon cross-racial feminist relations. In the next section that reads across the oeuvres of Moraga and Barbara Smith, I will argue that Cecilia's growing awareness of racial binaries is intricately linked to an internalisation of the black-white paradigm that threatens the existence of cross-racial feminism through its denial of contradiction.

'On Black-Brown relations': reading across the work of Cherríe Moraga and Barbara Smith[39]

By reading across the work of Cherríe Moraga and Barbara Smith, we are able to gauge the damaging effect of the black-white paradigm at both micro- and macro-levels of cross-racial feminist alliance, highlighting the validity of an identity politics that draws links between personal and political spheres. This is a politics of risk,

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[37] Ibid., 240. Taunya Banks also notes skin tone bias, amongst Mexican Americans: 'Skin tone bias is not limited to black Americans. Empirical studies also suggest a correlation between skin tone and education or income for Mexican Americans. Mexican Americans with dark skin tones and indigenous features fair poorly compared with Mexican Americans with light skin tones and more European features.' Taunya Lovell Banks, 'Multilayered Racism: Courts' Continued Resistance to Colorism Claims', in Evelyn Nakano Glenn (Ed.), *Shades of Difference: Why Skin Color Matters* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 214.

[38] Leslie Espinoza and Angela P. Harris, 'Embracing the Tar-Baby: LatCrit Theory and the Sticky Mess of Race' in Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Eds.), *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 444.

[39] From Jorge Klor de Alva *et al*, 'On Black-Brown Relations'.

fraught with the possibilities of confession that emanate from self-reflection, which is why I posit that the generative potential of fiction is necessary to Moraga's politics, offering an imaginative sanctuary of 'falsity' where painful truths can be interrogated. I argue that the painful truth emanating from a cross-reading of Moraga and Smith is the internalisation of oppression portrayed in 'Pesadilla', where a Latina responds to the black-white paradigm by inhabiting the role of oppressor. Although the black-white paradigm fails to name any non-black identity of colour except the 'other' it wishes to negate by the very nature of its non-contradiction, critical race theory demonstrates that Latinos are nonetheless affected by this binaristic configuration of race. Moraga's own involvement in maintaining this paradigm is addressed through a combined reading of fiction and essay that is helpfully intertwined with the work of Smith, a black feminist colleague from the cross-racial alliance of Kitchen Table Press, in a genre-defying reflection of U.S. third world feminist methodologies.

'Pesadilla' expands elements of the autotheoretical discussed in the previous chapter, so that the macro- and micro-levels of U.S. third world feminism are addressed not just within a single text but by analysing Moraga's text alongside the work of Barbara Smith. In her analysis of methodological approaches to social movement research, Suzanne Staggenborg elaborates on this necessary link between macro- and micro-levels, calling for more research at an intermediate 'meso' level of analysis that accounts for the connections between 'micro-level interactions [and] macro-level social structures and changes.'[40] For Staggenborg, this involves 'making connections among levels of analysis to develop more complete theories….'[41] The connections between the oeuvres of Moraga and Smith form an extension of the

[40] Suzanne Staggenborg, 'The "Meso" in Social Movement Research' in David S. Meyer, Nancy Whittier, and Belinda Robnett (Eds), *Social Movements: Identity, Culture, and the State*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 124.
[41] Ibid.

literary alliance performed by *This Bridge Called My Back* and Kitchen Table Press, necessarily shifting between the wider politics of U.S. third world feminism and the intimate relationship depicted in 'Pesadilla' between a black and Latina couple, demonstrating once again the interconnection of personal and political arenas. Considered in light of the interwoven literary and political output of Moraga and Smith, 'Pesadilla' can be regarded as part of a wider political project to negotiate critical differences among women of colour in order to subsequently overcome the forms of oppression that unite them. The critical difference uncovered through such a reading is the contradictory nightmare of internalised oppression amongst women of colour where the roles of oppressor and oppressed are simultaneously occupied.

In her highly personal introduction to *Bridge*, we hear Moraga in conversation with black feminists. These conversations herald a dialogic project of differential consciousness that entails confronting how feminists of colour may have oppressed the very women they seek political alliance with, through an internalisation of racial structures. Significantly, this dialogue is not confined to *Bridge* if we consider the connections between the work of Moraga and Barbara Smith. These connections engender a dialogic form of literary community dedicated to overcoming divisions between feminists of colour. As with the process of consciousness-raising, the complexity of cross-racial feminist alliance that draws together women from different backgrounds is developed by Moraga through exchanges with feminists Audre Lorde and Barbara Smith:

> "See whose face it wears," Audre says. And I know I must open my eyes and mouth and hands to name the color and texture of my fear.
>
> …I had nearly forgotten that I wanted/needed to deal with racism because I couldn't stand being separated from other women…. I first felt this the most acutely with Black women – Black dykes – who I felt ignored me, wrote me off because I looked white. And yet, the truth was that I didn't know Black women intimately (Barbara says "it's about who you can sit down to a meal with, who you can cry with, whose face you can touch"). (*Bridge*, xvii)

There is a desire for unity with black women, but a lack of understanding of their lived experiences. Through dialogue – 'Audre says', 'Barbara says' – it becomes evident that these experiences of race not only affect black women but also relate to the 'color' of Moraga's fear, embodied as the nightmare, the 'pesadilla', of an internalised black-white paradigm:

> This [fear of similarity in the 'other'] is the oppressor's nightmare, but it is not exclusive to him. We women have a similar nightmare, for each of us in some way has been both the oppressed and the oppressor. We are afraid to look at how we have failed each other. We are afraid to see how we have taken the values of our oppressor into our hearts and turned them against ourselves and one another.… [I]n a white-dominated world, there is little getting around racism and our own internalization of it. It's always there, embodied in someone we least expect to rub up against. When we do rub up against this person, *there* then is the challenge. *There* then is the opportunity to look at the nightmare within us. But we usually shrink from such a challenge. (*LWY*, 48, 49)

While it may seem that overtly, Moraga has consciously withdrawn from the challenges posed by cross-racial alliance, as discussed in the last chapter, textual traces remain of a confrontation with internalised oppression that is of benefit to the ongoing project of cross-racial alliance. This surprise encounter occurs through a textual relationship with one of the very women supporting the anticolonial, antiracist project of U.S. third world feminism, Barbara Smith.

Barbara Smith's introduction to the *Home Girls* anthology makes it evident that 'Pesadilla' draws upon fact, as she describes the violence of homophobia experienced by herself and her partner:

> In the past year, our apartment was broken into, ransacked, and robbed. The robber identified himself as a Black man by writing it on the just-painted walls. Having ascertained that I was Black and a Lesbian he also aimed the vilest obscenities at me. Incensed that a Black woman existed who was not a potential sexual partner for him, he said just that. For weeks after, we lived in terror. Since he knew where we lived, we were afraid that he might come back to rob us, attack us, even kill us. Or he could have gotten one of his friends to do the same.[42]

[42] Barbara Smith (Ed.), *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, New Jersey and London, 2000), xlviii.

It is not certain whether both Smith and Moraga experienced this act of violence. Neither is this chapter concerned with stating that the characters of Cecilia and Deborah are depictions of Moraga and Smith. It is no secret that Moraga and Smith knew each other; they were both founders of Kitchen Table Press and we have seen that Smith is an important colleague and friend to Moraga, whose words in fact inspired the title of *Bridge* (*Bridge*, xv).[43] What is of concern is the way in which this factual event has been related and retold between feminists of colour through the short story form, in order to enlighten readers on the issue of internalised oppression. The nightmare faced by Cecilia is transposed onto another lesbian couple in Smith's short story, 'Home', which makes us re-evaluate how the black-white paradigm of 'Pesadila' suppresses cultural heritage.

First published in *Conditions: Eight* and included in *Home Girls*, the plot of the short story 'Home' in many ways reflects that of 'Pesadilla.'[44] At the story's outset, a lesbian couple, the unnamed protagonist and her lover, Leila, have moved to a new city three days ago and are renovating the apartment they have moved into. The setting for the story is this apartment, where the protagonist sits by an open window, unable to sleep following a dream about her aunt. This remains the setting until the end of the story, when the protagonist returns to bed, having occupied her bout of sleeplessness with a combination of flashbacks and imagined scenarios. In the protagonist's dreamed conversations with her late Aunt LaRue, the woman who raised her following the death of her mother, 'Home' foregrounds the value of the imagination that is able to compensate for absences – 'For lack of information I imagine things about them' – and for the connections to personal histories that have

[43] See also Kayann Short, 'Coming to the Table: The Differential Politics of *This Bridge Called My Back'*, in Carol Siegel and Ann Kibbey (Eds.), *Eroticism and Containment: Notes from the Flood Plain* (*Genders 20*) (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 4-5.
[44] Barbara Smith, 'Home' in Smith, *Home Girls*.

been ruptured, evident in the protagonist's desire to '…make the reality of my life now and where I came from touch.'[45] The generative use of dreams in 'Home' is a helpful contrast to the nightmare of Moraga's short story, highlighting an accommodation of maternal figures that makes us question Cecilia's exile of La Llorona/La Loca.

In Randall Jarrell's interpretation of Freud, he argues that dreams both satisfy and punish our wishes.[46] 'Home' and 'Pesadilla' both utilise elaborations of dreams, but from different motivations and to varying effects. The dreams and reveries of 'Home' are motivated by loss[47] and can be viewed as a manifestation of mourning, whilst at the same time satisfying the protagonist's wishes to once again embody the same space as her Aunt LaRue. Dreams enable Smith's protagonist to envision a home that encompasses the maternal figures, 'all the women who'd raised me,'[48] who have shaped her notion of 'woman'. Cecilia's *pesadilla*, however, is an entity of terror, where the informative cultural heritage of the maternal figure is exiled to a landscape structured by a black-white racial paradigm that conflates race and ethnicity. The difficulty of acknowledging an internalisation of this conflation, and the possibility that one has suppressed both other women of colour and one's own cultural heritage, requires the specific devices of the short story form.

Imagining lives through fiction: internalisation and the short story

The factual connections of 'Pesadilla' and 'Home' align them to the autotheoretical, drawing upon autobiographical experiences, or those recounted from others, in order

[45] Ibid., 66, 67.
[46] Randall Jarrell, 'Stories' in Charles E. May (Ed.), *The New Short Story Theories* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994), 4.
[47] Jewelle Gomez, 'A Cultural Legacy Denied and Discovered: Black Lesbians in Fiction by Women' in Smith, *Home Girls*, 119-120.
[48] Smith, 'Home', 64.

to flesh out a theoretical practice that is capable of effecting change for characters such as Cecilia and Deborah. The use of fiction in addition to factual elements does not preclude Moraga's short story from being viewed in a way similar to autotheoretical texts. The contradictory combination of fact and fiction is a beneficial one, creating politicised imagined spaces based on lived experiences, emanating from the differential consciousness espoused by U.S. third world feminism. With 'Pesadilla', this is done specifically through a use of the short story form. This choice of literary form is, I argue, vital to viewing Moraga's story as a consciousness-raising tool for U.S. third world feminists of colour around the internalisation of the black-white paradigm. Following an outline of the characteristics of the short story that lend this genre to the project of U.S. third world feminism, I will demonstrate how these qualities appear in 'Pesadilla' to expose the harmful effects of non-contradiction, where an internalisation of the black-white paradigm causes a dangerous conflation of race and ethnicity that suppresses interracial desire and cultural heritage.

Certain characteristics of the short story form make it an appropriate choice of genre for use by a U.S. third world feminist. Ever since Edgar Allen Poe's elucidations of the 'tale' in his review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'Twice-Told Tales',[49] the stature of the short story in America has been increasingly scrutinised. B. M. Éjxenbaum even argued in the 1960s that, 'The story, precisely as *small form* (short story), has nowhere been so consistently cultivated as in America.'[50] Perhaps so, with writers from Kate Chopin and Eudora Welty, to John Updike and Donald Barthelme highlighting the national utility of this form that has proven to be a rich artistic outlet, but this cultivation has been aided by influences outside the United

[49] Edgar Allan Poe, 'Review of Twice-Told Tales' in Charles E. May (Ed.), *The New Short Story Theories* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994).
[50] B. M. Éjxenbaum, 'O. Henry and the Theory of the Short Story' in Charles E. May (Ed.), *The New Short Story Theories* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994), 82-3.

States and traditional literary forms, connoting a specific attraction to the short story form for feminists of colour.

In arguing that the short story is associated with anecdote and folklore, Mary Louise Pratt highlights its 'tradition of orality' that 'has special significance in cultures where literacy is not the norm, or where the standard literary language is that of an oppressor.'[51] This connection between orality and the short story is, argues Pratt, one of the causes behind the thriving short story form in global postcolonial literatures and 'the modern literatures of many Third World nations and peoples….'[52] Pratt includes Toni Cade Bambara, contributor to *Bridge*, as an example of a writer utilising representations of oral language 'in rejection of an oppressive literary standard.'[53] The use of the short story form is appropriate for this anti-colonial project, argues Pratt, due to the way in which, 'In some cases at least, there seem to develop dialectical correspondences between minor or marginal genres and what are evaluated as minor or marginal subjects.[54] These marginal subjects include, of course, women, who have historically been alienated from literary traditions which, argues Ellen Burton Harrington, makes the short story a common choice for women writers.[55] Lacking the perceived gravitas and stamina of the novel, which through its length gives the impression of greater complexity, the short story has often been deemed less important, and less worthy of critical attention.[56] Marginalised as woman, Chicana lesbian and third world feminist, the short story is a fertile

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[51] Mary Louise Pratt, 'The Short Story: The Long and Short of It' in Charles E. May (Ed.), *The New Short Story Theories* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994), 108.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., 106.
[55] Ellen Burton Harrington, 'Women Writers and the Outlaw Form of the Short Story' in Ellen Burton Harrington (Ed.), *Scribbling Women and the Short Story Form: Approaches by American and British Women Writers* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 8.
[56] Charles E. May, 'The Nature of Knowledge in Short Fiction' in Charles E. May (Ed.), *The New Short Story Theories* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994), 131-32.

framework for Moraga's role as political writer, demonstrating a consciousness of her marginalisation through genre choice. In addition to evoking the consequences of oppression, the short story is used by Moraga in a political act that reconfigures folklore to foreground contemporary circumstances that have been obscured and devalued through the workings of hegemonic feminism and patriarchy.

Moraga's reconfiguration of La Llorona through the use of the short story is part of the anti-colonial impetus of U.S. third world feminism that, as Chela Sandoval has noted in Chapter Three, aligns itself with worldwide movements of decolonization in its goal to address what it perceives as internal colonization within the United States. Moraga uses the short story form as both woman and U.S. third world writer, drawing upon Frank O'Connor's dispossessed outlaw figure:

> Always in the short story there is this sense of outlawed figures wandering about the fringes of society, superimposed sometimes on symbolic figures whom they caricature and echo – Christ, Socrates, Moses. […] As a result there is in the short story at its most characteristic something we do not often find in the novel – an intense awareness of human loneliness. Indeed, it might be truer to say that while we often read a familiar novel again for companionship, we approach the short story in a very different mood. It is more akin to the mood of Pascal's saying: *Le silence éternal de ces espaces infinis m'effraie*.[57]

'Pesadilla' maps its outlaw figure, Cecilia, onto such a symbolic figure: the body of La Llorona. As a 'raceless' Latina lesbian, unable to identify as 'brown' due to the binaristic limitations of federal classifications, Cecilia is caught between the security of her previous white lovers and the danger associated with Deborah, her black lover, and consequently struggles to align herself with either. Placed in this tenuous societal position, Cecilia becomes the symbolic wanderer, estranged from her lovers as well as her Latina heritage, which is conveyed through Cecilia's relationship with her mother.

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[57] Frank O'Connor, *The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story* (Cork City Council: Cork, 2003) [First published 1962], 5. Translated into English, Pascal's saying reads, *The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me.*

The presence of La Llorona in 'Pesadilla' is introduced through the description of 'La Loca,' the apartment's previous tenant who 'was said to have had five dogs and five children crowded into the one-bedroom apartment' (*LWY*, 31). La Llorona ('the weeping woman') is a recurring mythological figure of Chicano culture and is '[a]ssociated with water, drownings, and the mysterious forces of night.'[58] La Llorona is said to have killed her own children, as depicted in Naomi Quiñonez's poem that portrays the multiple characteristics associated with this figure:

> La Llorona – madre perdida
> who searches eternally
> the phantom murderess
> who has killed her children,
> the rejected mother of desgraciados.
> […]
> La madre bendita
> La mujer fuerte
> La puta madre
> La soldadera
> La India amorosa
> La mujer dolorosa[59]

As we can see from this excerpt, the various associations made with La Llorona are often contradictory. She is at once linked with sacred archetypes such as la Virgen de Guadalupe – 'la madre bendita' ('the blessed mother') – and vilified myths such as La Malinche – 'La puta madre' ('the whore mother'). The final embodiment that Quiñonez attributes to La Llorona in this passage, 'la mujer dolorosa' ('the suffering woman'), is mirrored in Cecilia's assessment of the dirt and rage that remains in the apartment following the departure of 'La Loca': '*¿Quién sabe la pena que sufría esa mujer?'* (*LWY*, 31).[60] In the contemporary usage of La Llorona, this suffering has

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[58] Tey Diana Rebolledo and Eliana S. Rivero (Eds.), *Infinite Divisions: An Anthology of Chicana Literature* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1993), 194.
[59] Rebolledo and Rivero translate the last six lines as: the blessed mother / the strong woman / the whore mother / the soldadera girl / the loving Indian [woman] / the suffering woman. Naomi Quiñonez, 'La Llorona' in ibid., 218-19.
[60] *Who knows the pain that this woman suffered?*

been used to depict the societal marginalisation of Chicana/os, reflecting the plight of a woman 'whose children are lost because of their assimilation into the dominant culture, or because of violence and prejudice.'[61]

As in Quiñonez's poem, I would argue that the loss of La Llorona has on occasion been reconfigured to address the grief of her descendants who feel the absence of 'madre perdida', the lost mother. For Cecilia, the distance between herself and her mother offers up a similar dilemma of cultural loss, as she leaves her mother's home for the 'whiteness' of Berkeley. There are clues to an association between Cecilia's mother and La Llorona in Moraga's imagery that emotionally connects mother and daughter through one of the sites frequented by La Llorona, the river[62]: 'Again. A river returned. A river whose pull always before that moment had swept Cecilia off her chair and into her mother's arms' (*LWY*, 35). Unlike the black protagonist of 'Home', however, whose reverie about the maternal figures in her life enables her to return to bed with her lover, the nightmare of internalised oppression results in separation for Cecilia, with Deborah exiled along with the maternal figure of Mexican cultural heritage. Denied access by the manifestation of the black-white paradigm, Cecilia is separated from the women she loves, and her own cultural identity. There is no happy ending for this story but the revelatory conclusion does perform an important, dialogic function that extends the exchange between the oeuvres of Moraga and Smith, to the reader.

Through a utilisation of the weighty disclosure common to the ending of the short story, 'Pesadilla' draws the reader into the process of consciousness-raising.

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[61] Rebolledo and Rivero, 194.

[62] Jane Rogers in María Herrera-Sobek, 'Chicano/a Literary and Visual Arts: Intertextuality of Three Iconic Figures – La Llorona, La Malinche, and the Virgin of Guadalupe' in Timothy Fong (Ed.), *Ethnic Studies Research: Approaches and Perspectives* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2008), 291.

Éjxenbaum argued that the short story 'amasses its whole weight *toward the ending*. Like a bomb dropped from an airplane, it must speed downwards so as to strike with its war-head full-force on the target.'[63] This is not to say that the story leading up to the end is of little importance but that, rather, the constituent elements of the story, as Poe argued, must be configured with the dénouement in mind,[64] with the rest of the story maintaining 'a strong under current of *suggestion'* that acts as a foundation to 'what is rightly termed by Schlegel, the *unity or totality of interest*.'[65] The characterisation of the vandal as 'animal' and 'beast' laces 'Pesadilla' with a sense of fear, as the spectre of race embodied in this figure begins to gradually invade and erode the couple's relationship. This underlying suggestion of terror culminates at the end of the story with the revelation that the man on the fire escape is in fact Deborah. As I have argued above, however, this revelation tells us more about the protagonist than other characters; the end of 'Pesadilla' reveals to Cecilia who and what she is excluding from her life, namely women of colour. In effect, the end of 'Pesadilla' depicts the revelatory moment of consciousness-raising. Charles May argues that Éjxenbaum's focus on the end of the short story emphasises conclusion and closure as central characteristics of the form.[66] I agree with the importance placed on the story's end, but in addition argue that for Moraga, the short story is a political tool whose revelatory end is in fact a potential beginning, encouraging the reader to take forward the raised consciousness made possible through the process of storytelling enacted across multiple oeuvres.

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[63] Éjxenbaum, 'O. Henry and the Theory of the Short Story', 81.
[64] Edgar Allen Poe, 'The Philosophy of Composition' in Charles E. May (Ed.), *The New Short Story Theories* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994), 67.
[65] Edgar Allen Poe, 'Review of Twice-Told Tales', 60, 65.
[66] May, xvii.

As Ellen Burton Harrington points out, Poe emphasises an element of readerly participation in the construction of short stories' meanings, which is encouraged through the intensity of reading a tale in one sitting, a process not generally possible with the novel.[67] In addition, the revelatory moment that comes at the end of the story acts as a form of epiphany or, to use Maurice Shadbolt's term, a 'hallucinatory point' that is uncovered as much by the reader as the author:

> The short story is a craftsman's challenge to the writer, any writer, and may again – if successful – reward the reader in proportion to the extent of the challenge embraced. For the real challenge is […] no less than the endeavor to pull as much of life as a story can bear into the fewest possible pages: to produce, if possible, that hallucinatory point in which time past and time future seem to co-exist with time present, that hallucinatory point which to me defines the good or great short story; a point which, like a stone tossed in a pool, sends ripples widening across all that we see and know, and all that we have never really seen and known, at the very instant that it sinks out of sight itself.[68]

Such a hallucinatory point can become known in a shocking manner, as with the end of 'Pesadilla' where the composite parts of the story collide to reveal the multilayered oppression that has been internalised by Cecilia. The 'reward' of such revelations is the exposure of previously unidentified realities: 'If he is any kind of architect at all, the story-writer will build a house in which truth, in some variety, can take up residence; and he, as much as the reader, may in the end be surprised by the nature of his guest.'[69] Resulting from the unexpected encounters with those we know that uncovers oppression, earlier highlighted by Moraga, these hallucinatory points are not far removed from the 'lightbulb moments' of consciousness-raising discussed in Chapter Three. Like a stone sending ripples across the water, the vandal, more intruder than guest, sets in motion an increasing momentum that affects various aspects of Cecilia's life, uncovering possible truths related to the workings of racism

[67] Harrington, *Scribbling Women*, 4-5 and Poe, 'Review of Twice-Told Tales', 60.
[68] Maurice Shadbolt, 'The Hallucinatory Point' in Charles E. May (Ed.), *The New Short Story Theories* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994), 269.
[69] Ibid., 270.

that lie behind her increasing unease around Deborah, who does not conform to Cecilia's white- and male-identified notions of sexuality.

The exposure of oppressive realities that have lain dormant is, as we have seen, one of the aims of consciousness-raising. In the manner that consciousness-raising allows for the naming of one's experience through an insight into everyday encounters that demonstrate how lives are dictated by externally constructed ideology, Moraga's autotheoretical interpretation of the short story genre identifies the societal barriers that prevent Cecilia from acting upon her desire for a black woman. As it is presented, 'Pesadilla' does not demonstrate Cecilia's interpretation of the significance of the story's revelations. Instead, it is for the reader to transform the exposure of Cecilia's 'inner world' into a usable story that demonstrates an individual's oscillation between the roles of oppressor and oppressed engendered through the polarised power dynamic of the black-white paradigm. (By usable, I mean the reader's ability to apply the same degree of internal consciousness-raising demonstrated in the story, to themselves.) This ability to expose subconscious realms is one that Charles May associates with the craft of the short story, and which is used in 'Pesadilla' to uncover the damaging effects of a subconscious entrenchment of the black-white paradigm.

As opposed to the novel, May argues that the brevity of short fiction establishes 'the primacy of "an experience" directly and emotionally created and encountered.'[70] This experience, explains May, is by means of the short story's length less concerned with establishing details of the surrounding material world than it is with depicting an inner reality:

> If the novel creates the illusion of reality by presenting a literal authenticity to the material facts of the external world, as Ian Watt suggests, the short story attempts to be authentic to the immaterial reality of the inner world of the self in its relation to eternal rather than temporal reality. If the novel's quest for extensional reality takes place in the social world and the material of its analyses are manners as the indication

[70] May, 'The Nature of Knowledge in Short Fiction', 133.

> of one's soul, as Lionel Trilling says, the field of research for the short story is the primitive, antisocial world of the unconscious, and the material of its analysis are not manners, but dreams.… The novel exists to reaffirm the world of "everyday" reality; the short story exists to "defamiliarize" the everyday.[71]

What May seems to overlook in his assessment of the short story's depiction of the unconscious is the way in which public and private – material and immaterial – worlds are interwoven. The arena of the short story may be mostly confined to an analysis of the unconscious but this does not rule out the opportunity to deconstruct damaging elements of the subconscious, much like Freud's 'dreamwork',[72] such as polarised racial schemas that affect the conscious, everyday world. 'Pesadilla' combines elements of May's interpretation of the 'inner world' of short fiction whilst subverting others to enact a more traditionally feminist project that unearths just how storytelling can 'spring from one's confrontation with the everyday world.' It is in fact the dangers of the everyday world, such as the racialised homophobic violence recounted by Barbara Smith, which inspires Moraga's storytelling. Like Scheherazade narrating stories to save her life, 'Pesadilla' tells a story that is derived from the immediate need to alter the course of life-threatening circumstances.

[71] Ibid.
[72] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (London: Wordsworth, 1997).

Conclusions

In the previous chapter exploring Moraga's involvement with Kitchen Table Press, we have seen that the writer attributed her shift from cross-racial feminist alliance, to an unhelpful concentration by African American feminists upon the black-white paradigm of race relations in the United States. Such a focus, Moraga argued, left inadequate space for the identity politics of Chicana subjectivity. This chapter has interrogated Moraga's claim, arguing that the black-white paradigm in fact continues to inform Moraga's explorations of Chicana subjectivity, through an internalisation of this oppressive racial binary that is evident through the contradiction of being both oppressor and oppressed. This contradiction arises in Moraga's short story, 'Pesadilla', which moves from the local-level group politics of cross-racial feminism in the previous chapter, to the interpersonal relationship of a black and Latina lesbian couple, following the personal-political trajectory etched out through identity politics.

In 'Pesadilla', we are introduced to the destructive figure of race. The horror radiating from this figure is, I argue, the horror of the non-contradictory black-white paradigm of race relations in the United States that affects all citizens, not just those classified as black and white. Simplistically stratifying identity through the oppositional notion of 'race' where one is either aligned to the positive attributes of whiteness or its negation, black/non-white, this paradigm leaves no room for contradiction: regardless of one's skin colour, one is either 'raced' as black or white, as socially acceptable or undesirable Other. Faced with this stark choice, Cecilia, a Latina, rejects her black lover. This is also, through the story's revelatory end that conflates Deborah with the figure of La Llorona, a banishment of Cecilia's Mexican cultural heritage. Through an exploration of critical race theory, which draws links between the racialised workings of public, legislative mechanisms and individual

conceptualisations of race in order to acknowledge and remedy sites of prejudice, this chapter has demonstrated that Cecilia's rejection of racialised 'otherness' emanates from entrenched notions such as 'colorism'.

Colorism perpetuates the principle of white supremacy within diverse communities of colour and as 'Pesadilla' demonstrates, within cross-racial communities of colour. The existence of this critical manifestation of a binaristic racial structure among heterogeneous peoples of colour helps us to better understand the difficult work of cross-racial alliance, where people united in overcoming racial oppression may not be aware of their own subconscious entrenchment of colorism. Despite Moraga's turn away from cross-racial alliance, 'Pesadilla' remains a helpful component of a process of consciousness-raising around the theme of internalised oppression. Like the feminist legacy of consciousness-raising that sought to uncover the thorny issues of sexism, and the consciousness-raising of U.S. third world feminists of colour that attempted to address divisions between women, 'Pesadilla' performs the act of consciousness-raising in a manner that aligns the story to the innovative workings of differential consciousness.

Read as an exploration of the textual traces developed between the oeuvres of Moraga and fellow Kitchen Table member Barbara Smith, this chapter has argued that 'Pesadilla' encourages us to read across authors, engendering a dialogic process akin to consciousness-raising that highlights the benefits of contradiction through a blending of fact and fiction. The vandalised apartment of an interracial lesbian couple in 'Pesadilla', factually alluded to in Smith's introduction to *Home Girls*, reappears in Smith's short story 'Home'. In Smith's story, reveries of deceased maternal figures are hopeful, allowing the unnamed protagonist to reoccupy the same space as the women who raised her. In contrast, Deborah, grafted onto the maternal figure of La

Llorona who represents a troubled Mexican heritage, is exiled from the apartment. In her internalisation of the black-white paradigm, Cecilia has conflated race and ethnicity, separating herself from both her black lover and her Mexican heritage, neither of which are afforded value in the underlying racial schema. Owing to the sensitive issues raised through this dialogic literary process, involving an acknowledgment of one's own oppression of others, I argue that the use of fiction offers a necessary sanctuary.

'Pesadilla' is the nightmare of Ariel Dorfman's epigraph that utilises the artistic realm of fiction as an exploratory tool that helps us to imagine solutions to real difficulties. In the case of 'Pesadilla', I argue that this fictional exploration requires the specific characteristics of the short story form. Following the short story form's propensity to focus on the private world of the subconscious, the spectre of internalised oppression is revealed in the hallucinatory point of the conclusion, where the elements of unease throughout the story converge in a shocking denouement. Importantly, this revelation is experienced by the reader who, unlike the author, is unaware of the signification of the combined composite elements until the final moment. This important role attributed to the reader of the short story supports the idea that 'Pesadilla' does not act as a stand-alone unit. As Mary Louise Pratt points out, the short story is usually never a book in itself, but works in conjunction with the other texts that surround it, be it a magazine, a collection of short stories, an anthology or in this case, a multi-genre collection of writing.[73] This chapter pushes Pratt's argument further: 'Pesadilla' not only points to the work of collaboration but asks the reader to enact this practice, too. In connecting 'Pesadilla' to the work of Barbara Smith, through either a retelling or shared experience of a violent attack,

[73] Pratt, 'The Short Story: The Long and Short of It', 103-4.

Moraga expands the challenge, and potential reward, to the reader. The textual connections between 'Pesadilla' and the work of Smith offer a psychologically insightful challenge to assess different reactions to a similar lived experience. The challenge to the reader of 'Pesadilla' is to read outside the text; to read the work of another feminist of colour that emanates from a similar plot. As with consciousness-raising, the reward lies in the reader's willingness to analyse her own reactions to the issues raised. To paraphrase Frank Kermode, the sense of an ending in 'Pesadilla' is only a beginning.[74]

[74] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Chapter Five

'La Chicana Indígena': a racialized mythologisation of indigeneity

When Indian knowledge is appropriated, it is called mestizaje.
Bartolomé Alonso Camaal,
Yucatec Maya teacher and civil servant[1]

The old songs will have to change.
Medea[2]

The previous chapter developed the theme of entrenched non-contradiction through internalised oppression. Narrating an internalisation of the black-white paradigm, Moraga's short story 'Pesadilla' demonstrates how the strictures of non-contradiction enforce a racialized homogeneity even among peoples of colour dedicated to overcoming racism. This chapter develops the theme of non-contradiction's harmful conflation of race and ethnicity, insinuated through the story's exile of La Llorona, whose cultural significance is displaced by the black-white paradigm of race relations that leaves no room for non-racialized articulations of identity. This chapter will argue that despite the beneficial revelations around internalised oppression emerging from Moraga's fictional consciousness-raising, as explored in the previous chapter, Moraga's identity politics remain enclosed within a harmful structure of non-contradiction, demonstrated through her essentialisation of indigeneity that is enacted through a problematic interpretation of mestizaje. I will make this argument through an exploration of Moraga's notion of 'la Chicana Indígena', a figure at the centre of the essay 'Queer Aztlán' who resurfaces in problematic depictions of female indigeneity in Moraga's play, *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea*.

[1] Taken from Natividad Gutiérrez and quoted in Analisa Taylor, *Indigeneity in the Mexican Cultural Imagination: Thresholds of Belonging* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2009), 94.
[2] Euripides, *Medea* ([Translated by Robin Robertson] London: Vintage Books, 2008), 25.

To argue that Moraga's conceptualisation of indigeneity manifests an Aristotelian limitation of non-contradiction that undermines the heterogeneity espoused elsewhere through her identity politics of Chicana subjectivity, I will firstly outline the figure of 'la Chicana Indígena.' This female indigenous figure exemplifies the way in which Moraga's interpretation of indigeneity is connected to a decolonial discourse of Chicano cultural nationalism that attempts to overturn the way in which both indigenous women and indigenous land have been colonised. I will demonstrate, however, that this discourse is tied to Mexican assimilationist policies of 'indigenismo' that have resulted in a displacement of heterogeneous female indigeneity through the singular endorsement of 'mestizaje'.[3] This displacement is perpetuated through Moraga's futuristic re-mythologisation of the Chicano national narrative. In an invocation of the infanticidal classical European figure of Medea, Moraga's play, *The Hungry Woman*, interrogates the validity of a nationalist movement whose anticolonial rebellion against cultural assimilation occurs alongside a continuing suppression of female and homosexual subjects. Through a reconfiguration of pre-Columbian female figures, the Chicano national narrative is retold as a power struggle resulting in the triumph of patriarchy. The potential of this narrative to engender progressive change within the rhetoric of Chicano nationalism is undermined, however, through the conspicuous absence of the symbolic mother of the mestizo race, La Malinche, from Moraga's contemporary myths.

[3] *Mestizaje* is the process of 'racial and cultural synthesis' specific to Spanish colonisation of the Americas, merging indigenous and black people, as well as white: 'When Spaniards invaded the New World in the 1500s and initiated contact with Amerindians in Mexico, the genesis of the Mexican community in the United States began.' Gregory Rodriguez, *Mongrels, Bastards, Orphans, and Vagabonds: Mexican Immigration and the Future of Race in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007), ix; and Manuel Gonzales, *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States (Bloomington: Indiana University Press)*, 9.

The absence of Malinche from *The Hungry Woman* and Moraga's trinity of indigenous mythological women, displays a continuation of Chicano nationalism's foundational stories of female treachery. Malinche, mistress of conquistador Hernán Cortés, is a figure pilloried by early proponents of Chicano nationalism through an allegorisation of her life as national betrayal, warning against female sexual and political agency. Malinche is *the* 'dark female other' of the Chicano national narrative, an indigenous woman whose existence precedes the arrival of European colonialists, yet the colour of her nationalism is politically anathema to the self-racialization of Moraga's mestizaje. Through a conflation of race and ethnicity, Moraga manipulates the rhetoric of indigeneity in order to engender a notion of authentic origination for the mestizo, a notion that is dependent upon an allegiance to the 'race' betrayed by Malinche, which paradoxically displaces contemporary Native Americans whose indigeneity is not dependent upon race.

La Chicana Indígena: overcoming the virgin-whore dichotomy of Chicano politics

'La Chicana Indígena' is, as the name suggests, a trope of Chicano cultural nationalist ideology that is concerned with foregrounding female indigeneity. La Chicana Indígena is the political focus of Moraga's essay that evaluates and critiques Chicano nationalism, 'Queer Aztlán'. The essay connects the imagery of dark female Others that populates Moraga's oeuvre, to the ideology of Chicano nationalism that Moraga argues has subjugated the political agency of Chicanas. La Chicana Indígena is Moraga's attempt to reconfigure the anticolonial rhetoric of Chicano nationalism through a re-evaluation of the patriarchal mechanisms that have suppressed female indigeneity. This indigenous female figure is Moraga's contribution to the ongoing attempts to define Chicano resistance.

Twenty-five years after the 1968 Blowouts of the Chicano movement,[4] Moraga has

> found a sense of place among la Chicanada. It is not always a safe place, but it is unequivocally the original familial place from which I am compelled to write, which I reach toward in my audiences, and which serves as my source of inspiration, voice, and lucha [struggle]. How we Chicanos define that struggle has always been the subject of debate and is ultimately the subject of this essay. (*LG*, 147)

'Queer Aztlán' attempts to address how Chicana/os define their source of struggle, which is also a source of inspiration, in light of internal conflict over gender and sexuality within the Chicano movement that has led to divisions between male and female, and homosexual and heterosexual activists. These divisions result in part from the unforeseen heterogeneity of the Chicano narrative, as described by Norma Alarcón:

> …the call for a story of Chicanas/os has not turned out to be a "definitive" culture as some had dreamed. Rather the term itself, in body and mind, has become a critical site of political, ideological, and discursive struggle through which the notion of "definitiveness" and hegemonic tendencies are placed in question.[5]

Moraga's 'Queer Aztlán' is located within this site of struggle, aligned to particular tenets of nationalism whilst at the same time critical of the variety of nationalism that has been presented through the male leadership of the Chicano Movement. For Moraga, any attempt to reconcile such ideological conflict must incorporate a

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[4] The 1968 Blowouts took place in the first few weeks of March, in East Los Angeles high schools. Over ten thousand students walked out of schools, protesting the inferior standard of education in schools populated by predominantly Mexican American students, and including demands such as bilingual and bicultural training for teachers, the removal of racist teachers and administrators, and the inclusion of Mexican history and culture in the curriculum. Dolores Delgado Bernal, 'Grassroots Leadership Reconceptualized: Chicana Oral Histories and the 1968 East Los Angeles School Blowouts', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* (Volume XIX, Number 2, 1998) 116-117. See also Carlos Muñoz, Jr., *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (London: Verso, 1989); 'The Blow Outs!' from the *Chicano Student News* in Luis Valdez and Stan Steiner (Eds.), *Aztlan: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature* (New York: Vintage, 1972), 301-303; and Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Chicano Politics: Reality and Promise, 1940-1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 121-122.

[5] Norma Alarcón, 'Chicana Feminism: In the Tracks of "The" Native Woman' in Carla Trujilo (Editor), *Living Chicana Theory* (Berkeley: Third Woman Press, 1998), 372.

deconstruction of nationalist, racialized gender practices and narratives that have resulted in the submergence of female indigeneity within a discourse of stratified 'heroes and saints'[6]; heroic, active male figures and saintly, passive women.

Gendered racialized practices within Chicano nationalism have been enacted through a discourse that suppresses female agency, especially female sexuality (hetero- and homosexual), by configuring female indigeneity as passive; whatever activity is permissible for indigenous women is in service to a male-centered nationalism that promotes the rights of men and families with a patriarchal structure. This discourse within the Chicano movement stems in part from gendered notions of "Indianness", in turn perpetuated through a male-centred and Mexican configuration of nationalism: while the Chicano movement made clear its alignment with an indigenous cultural identification through its invocation of pre-Cortésian peoples and cultures, its predominantly male leadership acted in a way that paradoxically perpetuated post-revolutionary Mexican conceptions of race and gender that depict indigenous women as either passive, suffering martyrs or traitors to their race. Moraga's compulsion to write is a personal and political need to resist the enforced passivity that suppresses female desire and formations of identity that incorporate female sexuality. This resistance questions the foundations of Chicano nationalist identity from a Chicana lesbian perspective, proposing a nationalism that relates not only to the physical and cultural geography of Aztlán but also to the site of a transgressive female body. This transgression remains, however, within the ideology of nationalism.

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[6] I refer, of course, to Moraga's play *Heroes and Saints,* which premiered in 1992 and follows a community of Mexican American agricultural labourers attempting to gain recognition of, and recompense for, the birth defects and illnesses caused by pesticides, embodied(!) in Cerezita, born with only a head. *Heroes and Saints and Other Plays*, Cherríe Moraga (Albuquerque: West End Press, 2000).

Although internal struggles over gender and sexuality have, as Maylei Blackwell argues, 'ultimately produced a new Chicana political identity,'[7] this identity remains within a nationalist framework. The purpose of Moraga's questioning is not far removed from the initial goals of the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 70s: Moraga's que(e)r(y)ing of the Chicano movement is a continuation of an anti-colonial, nationalist project that seeks to address the forms of occupation experienced by Mexican Americans:

> Chicanos are an occupied nation within a nation, and women and women's sexuality are occupied within Chicano nation. If women's roles have been historically regarded as territories to be conquered, they are also territories to be liberated. Feminism has taught us this. The nationalism I seek is one that decolonizes the brown and female body as it decolonizes the brown and female earth. It is a new nationalism in which la Chicana Indígena stands at the center, and heterosexism and homophobia are no longer the cultural order of the day. I cling to the word "nation" because without the specific naming of the nation, the nation will be lost…. (*LG*, 150)

This quote demonstrates the multifaceted nature of Queer Aztlán's political agenda that utilises la Chicana Indígena as its central signifier. La Chicana Indígena is representative of 'the brown and female earth,' a site that includes the mythical Aztlán employed during and since the civil rights era of the twentieth century, and which has been historically, environmentally, and metaphorically, abused: '*The earth is female*. Whether myth, metaphor, or memory, she is called "Mother" by all peoples of all times. *Madre Tierra*. Like woman, Madre Tierra has been raped, exploited for her resources, rendered inert, passive, and speechless' (*LG*, 172).[8] As such, any

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[7] Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power! Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 1.

[8] In line with an increased indigenous political presence, Latin American countries have begun to legislate for the rights of the earth and specifically, for 'Mother Earth', demonstrating the continued existence of indigenous philosophical influence upon national conceptions of the relationship between humans and their natural physical environment. Part of Bolivia's restructuring of its legal system since the change of constitution in 2009, Ley de Derechos de la Madre Tierra (Law of the Rights of Mother Earth) was been approved by politicians and grassroots movements in December 2010. This law proposes to grant nature equal rights to humans. Vice-President Alvaro García Linera said in 2011, 'Earth is the mother of all. [The law] establishes a new relationship between man and nature, the harmony

attempt at liberating Mexican Americans from past and present forms of colonisation must undertake to cease the continuation of patriarchal narratives that have infiltrated even purportedly anticolonial movements and that silence what is brown and female.

Patriarchal Chicano nationalist narratives have predominantly circulated around polarised notions of 'marianismo' and 'malinchismo' involving the figures of la Virgen de Guadalupe and La Malinche, that have been used 'to keep Movimiento women silent, sexually passive, and "Indian" in the colonial sense of the word' (*LG*, 157). These two female figures signify a simplified, dualistic conception of female morality that has aided the curtailment of Chicana political subjectivity by categorising Mexican American women as either passive or traitorous. Marianismo, the veneration of the Virgin Mary, has, argued Anna NietoGomez, been used to solidify the objectification and passivity of Mexican American women: 'The veneration of the Virgin Mary defined the woman's identity as a virgin, as a saintly mother, as a wife-sex object, as a martyr. With respect to the Chicana today, […] Marianismo has had a tremendous impact in fostering beliefs of negative existence and self denial.'[9] In contrast to this notion of passive women is the archetype of La Malinche/Malintzín Tenepal/Doña Marina, the indigenous woman whose roles as interpreter to Hernán Cortés and symbolic mother of the mestizo race have been interpreted by Mexican and Mexican American male nationalists in such a way as to foster the conception of '*malinchismo*, a term used to describe the "rejection and

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of which must be preserved as a guarantee of its regeneration.' The full Bill from which this Law derives, however, remains to be ratified. Quoted in John Vidal, 'Bolivia enshrines natural world's rights with equal status for Mother Earth,' *The Guardian*, 10th April 2011. Ecuador has also changed its constitution, affording rights to nature. Vidal, 'Bolivia enshrines natural world's rights.'

[9] Anna NietoGomez, 'La Chicana – Legacy of Suffering and Self-Denial' in Alma M. García (Ed.), *Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 49.

betrayal of one's own.'"[10] Reflective of wider Movimiento politics, seminal Chicano texts evidence this rhetoric of a malinchismo-marianismo binary that negates the political agency of Chicanas.

Indeed, 'El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan', Rodolfo Gonzalez's epic poem *Yo Soy Joaquín/I Am Joaquín* and Armando Rendon's *Chicano Manifesto* variously display an adherence to a nationalist rhetoric of the malinchismo-marianismo binary that displaces the Chicana body. Adopted at the 1969 Chicano Liberation Youth Conference in Colorado, 'El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan' defined the movement as a nationalist endeavour and set out organisational goals to achieve liberation.[11] Whilst notable for introducing a nationalist political framework through the geographical invocation of 'the northern land of Aztlan, from whence came our forefathers,'[12] El Plan is also noteworthy for the way in which this political agenda is articulated in a gendered fashion, highlighting notions of 'brotherhood' and 'la familia' that make invisible the political requirements of Mexican American women.

The masculine subjects and groupings of 'brother(s)', 'brotherhood', 'carnalismo' and 'forefathers' are used a total of seven times in El Plan, despite its brevity. Conversely, 'woman' is mentioned only once, along with 'every available man […] and child,' summoned to partake in the act of self-defence 'against the occupying forces of oppressors at every school.'[13] While the recurring motif of brotherhood throughout El Plan is undoubtedly designed to encourage a sense of cultural and political cohesion amongst Mexican Americans dedicated to overturning inequality, as Maylei Blackwell points out, 'brotherhood', or *carnalismo*, betrays

[10] Rodriguez, 8.
[11] 'El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan' in Luis Valdez and Stan Steiner (Eds.), *Aztlan: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature* (New York: Vintage, 1972), 402-406.
[12] Ibid., 402.
[13] Ibid., 406.

'culturally mediated concepts of masculinity' that 'led to the creation of a social movement culture based on masculinized codes, behaviors, and modes of organizing, thereby creating and reinforcing political philosophies and practices that had gendered implications for how the movement organized and who it validated as organizers and leaders.'[14] Not only were organisational roles affected by such a conception of brotherhood, but so too were the very definitions of the body politic seeking autonomy within the United States.

Similar to El Plan's recognition of a congruence between a liberated body and a liberated nation,[15] Rendon's 1971 *Chicano Manifesto* argues for the defence of a decidedly male Chicano body politic. Rendon argues that Chicano culture is a male-focused enterprise, and the forfeiting of Chicano culture and language poses a threat to 'the Chicano as a whole man,' whereby 'dominant society has sought to castrate him (cortarle los huevos)….'[16] For Rendon, culture itself is male, and Anglo attempts to encroach upon this culture are regarded as an act of feminisation. This configuration of a male autonomous nation/body leaves no room for the liberation of the Chicana body, faced with institutionalised abuses during the 1970s such as non-consensual, enforced sterilization in places such as Los Angeles and Puerto Rico.[17] As we can see in *Yo Soy Joaquín* this suppression of the Chicana body is carried out through a nationalist reconfiguration of indigenous figures.

A seminal cultural marker of the Chicano movement, Rodolfo Gonzales's 1967 bilingual poem, *Yo Soy Joaquín/I Am Joaquín*, charts the contradictions encountered by the eponymous mestizo protagonist in the wake of a Mexican

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[14] Blackwell, 64, 67.
[15] 'El Plan,' 406.
[16] Armando B. Rendon, *Chicano Manifesto* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), 4.
[17] See Vicki Ruiz, Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 113-14; Blackwell, 64; and Ana Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma* (New York: Plume, 1995), 35.

American political and cultural renaissance enabled through the Chicano movement. Joaquín negotiates his identity that encompasses histories of both oppression and subjugation, by claiming the names of pre-Cortésian and Mexican forebears: 'I am Nezahualcóyotl, / great leader of the Chichimecas. […] I am Emiliano Zapata.'[18] Joaquín purports to be inclusive of conflicting and numerous identities – 'I am the masses of my people and / I refuse to be absorbed'[19] – yet peoples his narrative selectively. The revolutionary potential of art is attributed to '… our great señores, / Diego Rivera, / Siqueiros, / Orozco …'[20] ignoring the work of their contemporary, Frida Kahlo or the earlier work of the fifteenth-century playwright, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Joaquín alludes to Hidalgo, the village priest who utters the famous 'Grito de Dolores' that heralded Mexican independence from Spain, as well as Benito Juarez and Pancho Villa, all figures associated with liberating Mexicans from repressive regimes. *Soldaderas*, however, Mexican women who took part in the Mexican Revolution of 1910-20 '… as wives, sweethearts, or paid service workers or as women who fought in their own right in their own units,' such as the military commanders Juana Gallo and Petra Ruiz,[21] do not merit a mention from Joaquín.

The omission of figures such as Sor Juana and *soldaderas*, women who eschewed aspects of normative femininity in order to pursue artistic and revolutionary objectives, results in a portrayal of women who are associated with the faithfulness and sacrifice of marianismo, rather than social or political action: 'I am / the black-shawled / faithful women / who die with me / or live / depending on the time and place. / I am / faithful, humble / Juan Diego, / the Virgin of Guadalupe, / Tonantzín,

[18] Gonzales, Rodolfo. *I Am Joaquín/Yo Soy Joaquín: An Epic Poem with a chronology of people and events in Mexican and Mexican American History* (New York: Bantam, 1972), 16, 34.
[19] Ibid. 100.
[20] Ibid., 70.
[21] Ruiz, 8, 111-12.

Aztec goddess, too.'[22] Tonantzín, a manifestation of Coatlicue, a goddess associated with the powers of creation and destruction,[23] is conflated with the Virgin Mary which, while arguably a subversive act of transfiguration on the part of indigenous Mexicans attempting to maintain their worship of pre-Cortésian deities under the guise of Christianity, nonetheless, as Ana Castillo points out, surrenders the agency of Tonantzin to a female figure who is ultimately denied the powers of creation through an immaculate conception.[24] In contrast to the paradoxically passive creation of Tonantzin, the overt sexual act of Malinche provides the basis for a narrative of abject maternal indigeneity, a narrative that is intimately connected to the Mexican nationalist process of *indigenismo*.

The objectification of Malinche: *indigenismo* and the appropriation of female indigeneity

I argue that the displacement of female indigeneity within narratives of Chicano nationalism occurs through processes of indigenismo that specifically objectify the political agency of indigenous women, through the trope of a traitorous mother. As will become evident when investigating Moraga's remythologisation of indigenous female figures, this objectification remains at play in Moraga's otherwise helpfully subversive reconfiguration of Medea, through the problematic absence of Malinche who does not conform to Moraga's racialized framework of non-contradiction. In a performance of binaristic non-contradiction, the traitorous mother is established as the negation of the esteemed Virgin Mother. Noted as the national symbol of Mexico, and lauded in Chicano political and cultural arenas, la Virgen de Guadalupe not only

[22] Gonzales, 42.
[23] See John Bierhorst, *The Hungry Woman: Myths and Legends of the Aztecs* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1984), 10 and Ana Castillo, 106.
[24] Castillo, 111, 102.

represents notions of purity; she is also significant for being the first *mestiza* Madonna,[25] acknowledging the racial mixture that has occurred between indigenous and Spanish peoples since the arrival of the conquístadores. It is highly significant that the Chicano Movement perpetuates the Mexican national idolisation of this female figure, for it belies a nationalist Mexican American agenda that claims to promote the indigenous heritage of Chicanos, but which in fact combines concepts of race and sexual morality that have resulted in the continued suppression of indigenous female subjectivity. Viewed in the context of the vilification and rejection of Malinche, the archetypal indigenous mother of the mestizo race, the high esteem placed upon la Virgen as a nationalist icon can be seen as a rejection of both the speech and sexual acts of Malinche and in turn, the 'dark female other.'

Two interrelated models of action are underscored in the Chicano nationalist mythologisation of Malinche as an archetype of treachery: speech and sex. Malinche's uses of language and her body are used to exemplify the dangers of allowing women access to the public realm, and control over their own bodies. Malinche is emblematic of the perceived dangers of female subjectivity, a model justifying the necessary objectification of women whose unchecked actions pose a danger to society.[26] The society in question is the nationalist project of legitimating Chicano cultural identity that is also an attempted legitimisation of patriarchy.

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[25] Tey Diana Rebolledo and Eliana S. Rivero (Eds.), *Infinite Divisions: An Anthology of Chicana Literature* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1993), 189.

[26] As Estelle Freedman reminds us, Western political theory deriving from the ancient Greeks divided life into gendered public and private arenas, with men dominating the *polis*, a male realm of politics, while women remained in the *oikos*, the female sphere of the home. The result of this spatial division was a differentiation in the *value* attributed to men and women: the *polis* required the skills of rhetoric and oratory, and became associated with male rationality, while the female sphere, excluded from the public-political arena where national state decisions were made, became associated with irrationality, to the extent that women were seen, as Plato argued, as endangering the state through their weaker natures. Estelle B. Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* (London, Profile: Books, 2002), 34

Malinche is paradoxically the last and first indigenous female associated with the mestizo race, heralding the end of 'pure' indigenous blood lines and the beginning of mestizaje, positioning her as '"The" Native Woman', to quote Norma Alarcón,[27] the paradigmatic indigenous female responsible for both the downfall of one race and the creation of another.[28] Despite her symbolic role in creating European-Indigenous Mexicans, later celebrated in Mexico and north of the border as 'La Raza de Bronze', 'la raza cosmica',[29] or Chicanos, it is with the demise of indigenous culture that Malinche is most commonly associated, with the Chicano Movement continuing to relate the destructive legacy of Spanish colonialism to the acts of an indigenous woman, demonstrating '…the historical repression of the "non-civilized" dark woman – which continues to operate through "regulative psychobiographies" of good and evil women, such as that of Guadalupe, Malinche, Llorona, and many others….' [30] Alongside her sexual liaison with Cortés, the other act used to label Malinche as sinful is her use of speech.

Given away by her mother and then sold into slavery, Malintzín Tenepal, also named Doña Marina by the Spanish, was given to Hernán Cortés upon his arrival in

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[27] Norma Alarcón, 'In the Tracks of "The" Native Woman'.

[28] Although the Chicano Movement encouraged a celebration of mestizo indigenous identity and an acceptance of its contradictory coloniser/colonised composition, as Sheila Marie Contreras argues, this celebration did not extend to the symbolic co-creator of this race, Malinche: 'An actual historical figure, Malinche […] was made into myth over five centuries of accounts of her life, which came to symbolize female treachery, unreliability, and victimization.' Sheila Marie Contreras, *Blood Lines: Myth, Indigenism, and Chicana/o Literature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 107.

[29] 'La raza cosmica' was famously coined by Jose Vasconcelos, and the use of 'La Raza de Bronze' that derives from Vasconcelos's term, can be seen in El Plan. See Guillermo Fuenfrios, 'The Emergence of the New Chicano' and 'El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan' both in Valdez and Steiner, *Aztlan: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature*.

[30] Alarcón, 376. *Psychobiography* is the study of individual lives, usually notable, public figures, using the methods of psychology. This process, as William Todd Schultz explains, is as much about the 'subjectivity and presuppositions (world-knowledge)' of the interpreter of biographical data as the figure under discussion, engendering an understanding of both author and subject. William Todd Schultz, 'Introducing Psychobiography' in William Todd Schultz (Ed.), *Handbook of Psychobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5.

Mexico.[31] Able to speak both Nahuatl and Maya languages, Malintzín was used as a translator by the Spanish, who had limited knowledge of indigenous languages.[32] In Laura Esquivel's novelistic portrayal, this linguistic adaptability is a survival mechanism, helping Malinche to cope with the varying locations and cultures she encounters as a result of being traded between masters.[33] Within Mexican American cultural and, more specifically, Chicano nationalist discourse, however, Malintzín's role as translator is used to bolster male leadership through a depiction of cultural treachery that negates the subjectivity of indigenous women. Whilst it is known that Malintzin was sold into slavery, the amount of agency this woman had over her role as translator, and what motivations she may have had for passing on information to the Spanish that aided their military campaigns against the Aztecs, remains the subject of myth. These actions, however, have been used to label Malinche as a traitor, to the extent that 'she has been marked in the Mexican popular consciousness as the embodiment of treachery,'[34] 'the ethnic traitress supreme.'[35]

Patriarchal interpretations of Malinche's role as translator have led to 'the extensive ideological sedimentation of the (Silent) Good Woman and the (Speech-producing) Bad Woman.'[36] This binary of silence and speech, grafted onto notions of good and evil, is present in Chicano cultural-political rhetoric that exemplifies this dyad through female passivity and action whereby the passivity of silence is foregrounded over the action of speech that is regarded as having the potential for immorality and treachery. The presence of women is authorised as silent object rather

[31] Cordelia Candelaria, 'La Malinche, Feminist Prototype,' *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* (Vol. 5, No. 2, Summer 1980), 2; Rebolledo and Rivero, 191.
[32] Rebolledo and Rivero, 191.
[33] Laura Esquivel, *Malinche* (London: Pocket Books, 2006).
[34] Contreras, 107.
[35] T. R. Fehrenbach, quoted in Candelaria, 1.
[36] Alarcón, 'In the Tracks of "The" Native Woman', 380.

than vocal subject, in order to solidify male subjectivity and in turn, male leadership. These acts of an indigenous woman have, I argue, been interpreted through a Chicano nationalist appropriation of indigenismo that pays less attention to history and more to a policy of mestizo assimilation.

Through a process akin to the Mexican assimilationist policies of indigenismo, the politicised indigenous woman has been assimilated, and obscured, into a European-influenced mestizo rhetoric that foregrounds the silent, sexless qualities of the virgin mother. The process of mestizaje is celebrated, but in a gendered manner that promotes '…the genetic and cultural mixture and absorption of (female) indigenous traits into (male) Euro-Iberian ones.'[37] With this absorption, noted by Analisa Taylor, comes a historical and contemporary erasure of indigenous female subjectivity. Although Taylor's analysis focuses on the process of indigenismo in Mexico following the 1910 Revolution, it is nonetheless helpful in contextualising Chicano national identity that has been influenced by the cultural and geographical proximity of Mexico.

Indigenismo, argues Taylor, is 'a social scientific paradigm wedded to a set of government institutions and policies as well as an aesthetic sensibility that has shaped a great deal of twentieth century Mexican art and literature.'[38] This aesthetic sensibility flourished following the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917, when artists began to:

> …look into their own historical and environmental contexts and found inspiration in American […] themes and subject matter. For Mexico, artists derived inspiration from their indigenous past. The glories of the Aztec and Maya empires were seen as appropriate subject matter that could be transformed into artistic cultural capital just as Greek and Roman cultures and civilizations had been appropriated during the Renaissance and thereafter by European artists.[39]

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[37] Analisa Taylor, *Indigeneity in the Mexican Cultural Imagination,* 85.
[38] Ibid., 1-2.
[39] María Herrera-Sobek, 'Chicano/a Literary and Visual Arts: Intertextuality of Three Iconic Figures – La Llorona, La Malinche, and the Virgin of Guadalupe' in Timothy Fong (Ed.),

Through the process of indigenismo, this focus on the culture and history of indigenous peoples in Mexico and the rest of Latin America came to connote two ideas: 'first, […] the idea that indigenous people should be included in the mainstream of modern national life; second, it refers to a literary and visual mode that projects a romantic, folkloric image of the Indian as stoic, abject, and mysterious.'[40] In Mexico, indigenismo has in fact shifted from the first to the second connotation, whereby the inclusion of indigenous peoples in national life has been transformed into an agenda of assimilation that is in part carried out through romanticised configurations of "Indians." Indigenous peoples are authorised to partake of mainstream, mestizo culture but only as romantic figures of days gone by who have no contemporary agency. Clearly, this is less of an 'authorisation' and more of a deculturalisation of indigenous identity as evidenced in the example of Mexico's Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI).

Through a brief exploration of INI, we can see how the process of indigenismo shifted from a focus on the cultural and political goals of indigenous peoples, to a state-sanctioned agenda of assimilation that sought to supplant indigenous traditions of language and land ownership with a focus on modern individualism, as seemingly embodied by the mestizo. Conceived in 1940 and inaugurated in 1949, INI, which eventually closed in 2003,[41] changed the cultural-

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Ethnic Studies Research: Approaches and Perspectives (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2008), 282.

[40] Taylor, 3.

[41] Ibid., 3, 4, 116.

political landscape for indigenous peoples that had, following the 1910 Revolution, brought to the surface the issue of indigenous land rights[42]:

> '…indigenismo's revolutionary founding principles – bilingual education, ambitious land redistribution, and cooperative land ownership according to traditional indigenous laws and norms (*usos y costumbres*) – were replaced by a singular focus on assimilating indigenous people to Spanish-speaking, commercially oriented national society. Post-1930s indigenista action was predicated on the notion that indigenous peoples needed to be acculturated as a precondition for full citizenship. Remade as modern, individualistic mestizos, Indians would finally be entitled to the revolutionary fruits of social justice and modernization.'[43]

'Revolutionary' no longer connoted the push for communal land rights on behalf of indigenous peoples resisting the domination of wealthy hacienda owners of European descent. Instead, indigenismo shifted from an agenda that acknowledged the voices of indigenous peoples, to one that silenced them by replacing 'indigenous' with 'mestizo': 'INI theorists and policy makers championed national cohesion and modernization through mestizaje, understood not as a mixture of two parts in equal measure, but as a genetic and cultural absorption and attenuation of indigenous into Hispanic traits.'[44] The increasing socio-political value placed upon the mestizo is also an issue for Native Americans in the United States.

Certain Native American scholars have greeted Chicano claims to indigenous heritage with a degree of scepticism owing to the way in which notions of mestizo hybridity have on occasion been theorised through the lens of indigenismo. Inés Hernández-Avila argues that Native American uncertainty over Chicana/o claims to indigenous heritage stem from a conception of mestizaje as a potentially modern form of colonialism:

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[42] Constitutional Article 27 'had established the state as the owner of land, water, forests, and mineral resources and gave it the power to limit private ownership and break up existing large estates in order to grant land to collective, non-transferrable owners….' Ibid., 5.
[43] Ibid., 3-4.
[44] Ibid., 7.

> …it is the Mexican cultural heritage of mestizaje, I believe, which makes Chicanas/Chicanos most suspect to Native peoples in the U.S., and it is Mexico's history of colonization and the attendant consequences to indigenous peoples over the course of centuries that creates an invisible but palpable wall between the two communities. From an indigenous perspective, this history is what makes it difficult if not impossible for Native peoples to swallow (tragar) theoretical perspectives that purport solidarity but actually perpetuate critical stances which assume the right to re-conquer.[45]

It is not the process of mestizaje or being of mixed heritage that has created scepticism over Chicano articulations of indigeneity. What is problematic for Native American scholars are interpretations of mestizaje through a framework of hybridity.

In *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, Craig Womack takes particular issue with Elvira Pulitano's endorsement of Gloria Anzaldúa's borderlands philosophy as an example of the way in which over-theoretical Western scholarship has attempted to broaden notions of indigeneity but manages instead to further marginalise Native Americans. This marginalisation occurs, argues Womack, through the implication that Anzaldúa's mestiza is representative of all Native Americans:

> I am not entirely comfortable assuming that Anzaldua's [*sic*] take on Mestiza issues apply to all American Indians. While I am sure a number of Native people will relate to Anzaldua's borderlands position, what about the Indian mixed-bloods we see so frequently in Oklahoma – and many other places in Indian Country – who, in spite of their various cultural and genetic inheritances, identify as Indians rather than hybrids, socializing with Indian people and viewing themselves in the center, rather than at the periphery, of Indian worlds? […] While many Native writers and critics have emphasized marginality, this has not always matched Indian people's vision of themselves, a gap between literary and social worlds that deserves some attention.[46]

Julie Gough argues that such a blanket enforcement of hybridity has the potential to be used as a tool 'to develop the binary codings necessary to elevate Self and subjugate Other: East and West, Black and White, Pagan and Christian…. By

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[45] Inés Hernández-Avila, 'Introduction', *Studies in American Indian Literatures* (Volume 15, Numbers 3 & 4, Fall 2003/Winter 2004), 2.
[46] Craig Womack, 'The Integrity of American Indian Claims (Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love My Hybridity)' in Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, Robert Warrior, *American Indian Literary Nationalism* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 136.

accepting the label 'hybrid'…Indigenous people relinquish the power to name themselves.'[47] Or, to quote Jace Weaver, 'To press everyone into a hybrid or mixed-blood mold is to consummate finally the as yet uncompleted enterprise of colonialism…. We will have been defined out of existence.'[48] As Womack has already noted, identifying with hybridity and mestizaje is not in itself problematic; what is troublesome is the notion that all indigenous peoples should identify as mestizos, leaving them open to assimilationist policies such as indigenismo that suppress elements of indigeneity in favour of mainstream socio-cultural markers, ranging from language use to aesthetic taste.[49] Mestizo identity is not the only way to be indigenous, and although Moraga does not claim this, her politics of an essentialised, biological inscription of female indigeneity imply as much. Such essentialised politics, which rely upon an inscription of race, are demonstrated through Moraga's reconfiguration of mythological dark, female Others.

The Other Medea: Cherríe Moraga's mythical dark women

Through a reconfiguration of Medea, Moraga rewrites the Chicano origin story, providing an alternative to Malinche's treachery that implicates the patriarchy of Chicano nationalism. Following an analysis of this progressive counter-narrative as a decolonising methodology, I will argue that Moraga's Medea is paradoxically undermined by the conspicuous absence of the dark female Other of Chicano nationalism, Malinche.

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[47] Julie Gough quoted in Jace Weaver, 'Splitting the Earth: First Utterances and Pluralist Separatism' in Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, Robert Warrior, *American Indian Literary Nationalism* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 29.
[48] Weaver, 'Splitting the Earth', 29.
[49] See Ana María Alonso on 'aesthetic statism', where the aesthetic sphere, in this case regarding hybridity and 'mixedness', has a relation to the political state. Ana María Alonso, 'Conforming Disconformity: "Mestizaje," Hybridity, and the Aesthetics of Mexican Nationalism', *Cultural Anthropology* (Vol. 19, Issue 4, 2004).

Mythological creation stories, or origin stories, offer cultural models that foster 'a meaningful relationship between each member of the community and between the community and the whole surrounding cosmos.'[50] The importance of origin stories to the project of Chicano nationalism is evident through the imagery of Aztlán, which affirmed the socio-political subjectivity of Mexican Americans by acting as 'a collective symbol by which to recover the past that had been wrestled away from the inhabitants […] through the multiple conquests of the area.'[51] Aztlán, explains Luis Leal, is both myth and symbol that has been adapted to signify the existence of Chicano sovereignty: 'As a symbol, it conveys the image of the cave (or sometimes a hill) representative of the origin of man; and as a myth, it symbolized the existence of a paradisiacal region where injustice, evil, sickness, old age, poverty, and misery do not exist.'[52] As well as fostering clams to sovereignty, Leal's description demonstrates the way in which creation narratives, or 'etiological myths',[53] also offer alternatives to, or respite from, societal ills. As with other creation stories, however, Chicano originary myths have been used as a form of patriarchal subjugation, as we have seen with the recurring nationalist trope of a treacherous Malinche.[54] Like

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[50] Paul G. Zolbrod, *Diné bahane': The Navajo Creation Story* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 23-24.

[51] Rudolfo A. Anaya and Fráncisco Lomeli (Eds.), *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), ii. Chicanos were not the first people of Mexican descent to emphasise indigenous ancestry: in the seventeenth century, anticolonial *criollo* nationalists, born in the Spanish colonies of Latin America and regarded as being of lower social status than European-born Spaniards (*peninsulares*), began to reevaluate the importance of Aztec heritage. See Alonso, 460-461.

[52] Luis Leal, 'In Search of Aztlán' in Anaya and Lomeli, 8.

[53] J. Hillis Miller defines etiological myths as 'that form of narration, almost always present among the myths, legends, and tales of any culture, that has as its purpose the explanation of mankind's origins, where man came from.' J. Hillis Miller, 'Narrative' in Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Eds.), *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 72.

[54] The dual opening of Genesis contains two possible narratives concerning Eve: Although Genesis 2:22 sees Eve created from the rib of Adam, Genesis 1:27 suggests that Adam and

Donna Haraway's cyborg, Moraga's restaging of mythology demonstrates that, like cultural traditions, mythology is capable of, indeed depends upon, change and adaptation to contemporary society:

> In retelling origin stories, cyborg authors subvert the central myths of origin of Western culture. We have all been colonized by those origin myths, with their longing for fulfilment in apocalypse. The phallogocentric origin stories most crucial for feminist cyborgs are built into the literal technologies…. Feminist cyborg stories have the task of recoding communication and intelligence to subvert command and control.[55]

In a similarly decolonial methodology, Moraga's Medea attempts to recode the patriarchal modes of communication that have controlled Chicanas through a subjugation of female indigeneity.

Moraga's choice of Medea stems from her recognition of a corresponding, dangerous 'darkness' between the classical European myth and indigenous female figures:

> When I read Euripides's *Medea*, I immediately recognized her as a Mexican woman. I also saw Pasolini's film version of *Medea*. […] I saw this dark Greek woman and it had such an impact on me. She is considered a very uncouth sorceress. What people fear about Medea and La Llorona is their power to give birth and to take life away, like the Aztec goddess Coatlicue.[56]

Like La Llorona, Medea is associated with the act of infanticide, an act that has been specifically attributed to a dark outsider female figure during times of political uncertainty. Euripides's portrayal of Medea has become the paradigmatic narrative of a woman scorned, seeking revenge upon her husband by killing their children. It is the Euripidean drama that modern versions of Medea, including Moraga's *The Hungry*

Eve are created at the same time, leading to questions around (patriarchal) politicised translations of the Bible. *The Holy Bible, King James Version* (New York: Oxford Edition, 1769); King James Bible Online, 2008. http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org

[55] Donna Haraway, 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s' in Linda J. Nicholson (Ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (Routledge: New York and London, 1990), 217.

[56] Cherríe Moraga interviewed by Juanita Heredia in Bridget Kevane and Juanita Heredia (Eds.), *Latina Self-Portraits: Interviews with Contemporary Women Writers* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 106.

Woman, use as a reference point.[57] Robert Graves is unequivocal about the enduring misrepresentations of Medea resulting from Euripides's depiction: '…the history of Medea has, of course, been embellished and distorted by the extravagant fancies of many tragic dramatists.'[58] The chief dramatic misrepresentation is, argues Graves, Euripides's 'manipulation' of the Medea myth that historicizes the act of infanticide. Through the play's performance at the Athenian festival in honour of Dionysus, for which Euripides would have received a handsome reward, the narrative of infanticide would have acquired a religious authority.[59] The purpose of legitimising this account of infanticide was, Graves argues, to distance Corinthians from accusations of human sacrifice – a practice that had come to be seen as barbaric but which may have been the cause of death of Medea's children[60] – by attributing the murderous act to a foreign woman.[61] This scapegoating of dark female figures can be linked to contemporary political instability.

In his translation of *Medea*, Robin Robertson's biographical outline of Euripides draws attention to the political instability surrounding the production and premiere of the play. The majority of Euripides's life took place in an Athenian culture that was at its zenith, 'when the empire was consolidated and the city was established as the cultural hub of the Greek-speaking world.'[62] The year of *Medea's* premiere, however, 431 BC, coincided with the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War,

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[57] Irma Mayorga, in her afterword to the published play, also notes that *The Hungry Woman* follows the structure of Euripides's play. Irma Mayorga, 'Homecoming: The Politics of Myth and Location in Cherríe L. Moraga's *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea* and *Heart of the Earth: A Popol Vuh Story'* in Cherríe L. Moraga, *The Hungry Woman* (Albuquerque: West End Press, 2001), 157.
[58] Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* [Combined Edition] (London: Penguin, 1992), 618.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Christa Wolf's novel *Medea*, to which Moraga makes reference, also suggests the clandestine use of human sacrifice by Corinthians, who use Medea as a scapegoat for their outmoded practice. Christa Wolf, *Medea: a modern retelling* (London: Virago, 1998).
[62] Robin Robertson, 'Introduction', Euripides, *Medea* (Translated by Robin Robertson, Vintage Books: London, 2008), xi.

which was to last for twenty-seven years, signalling a downward shift in Athenian fortunes,[63] a shift that Euripides would have been acutely aware of, being 'an artist who passed from his early forties into his fifties as his home city of Athens moved from an almost unquestioned dominance of the political and cultural life of the Greek world to the early years of the Peloponnesian War against its rival city-state, Sparta,'[64] which was to end in the defeat of Athens. This period of uncertainty is reflected in Euripides's portrayal of Medea, which depicts a female subjectivity that is decidedly 'foreign': Medea refers to herself as 'an outsider,' 'plunder from some foreign campaign,'[65] and Robertson argues that Medea's status as an outsider would have been 'underlined for contemporary audiences by her "foreign" dress.'[66] (Although Moraga perhaps understandably views Maria Callas's cinematic Medea as a 'dark Greek woman,' above, it was precisely because Medea was not Athenian that she was physically depicted as an outsider.) This conflation of an active female voice, anathema to Euripides's contemporary Athenian society, with an undesirable 'otherness', causes the physically 'dark' Medea to embody a geo-political and cultural uncertainty that threatens the future of the patriarchally structured dominance of Athens. This myth of a dangerous female outsider persists in the future narration of Chicano nationalism that denies political agency to the treacherous dark woman, Malinche. In an attempt to rewrite this narrative, Moraga's Medea decolonises the story of Aztlán through an inversion of treachery that interrogates patriarchal nationalism.

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[63] Ibid., xi-xii.
[64] Robin Mitchell-Boyask, 'Introduction', Euripides, *Medea* (Translated by Diane Arnson Svarlien, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 2008), vii.
[65] Euripides, *Medea* (Translated by Robin Robertson), 17.
[66] Robertson, xviii.

Moraga's *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea,*[67] follows the post-revolutionary, near-futuristic fortunes of Medea, a lesbian Chicana midwife and curandera who, along with undesirable citizens of Aztlán, has been exiled to Phoenix, Arizona, 'a kind of metaphysical border region between Gringolandia (U.S.A.) and Aztlán (Mechicano country)' that is 'the dumping site of every kind of poison and person unwanted by its neighbors' (*HW*, 6). Aztlán was established following an ethnic civil war that led to a 'balkanisation' of approximately half of the United States, resulting in the creation of nations of people including Africa-America, Aztlán, the Union of Indian Nations, Hawai'i Nation, and the confederacy of First Nations peoples in what was formerly Alaska (*HW*, 6). A counter-revolution in many of the newly-independent nations followed several years later, where gender hierarchies were established, and homosexuals like Medea were sent into exile (*HW*, 6). It is at this point, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, that the action of the play begins, with Medea in a prison psychiatric ward, having been accused of murdering her twelve-year-old son Chac-Mool, who lives in Arizona with his mother.

Chac-Mool's father is Jasón, a former revolutionary who is now seeking to cement his position in Aztlán in a modern-day land-grab that requires him to prove a sufficient indigenous blood quantum. Jasón intends to divorce Medea and marry a young Apache woman, who is 'Indian enough' (*HW*, 17) to ensure that their children will entitle Jasón to own land in Aztlán. When it becomes apparent that his new wife is unable to have children, Jasón seeks custody of Chac-Mool, who, as Medea explains to him, 'makes you legit, just like I did. […] He is your native claim. You

[67] Following a number of staged readings between 1995 and early 2000, *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea* premiered at The Magic Theater in San Francisco on December 4, 2000, directed by the playwright.

can't hold onto a handful of dirt in Aztlán without him. You don't have the blood quantum' (*HW*, 71, 72).

In a twist on the Euripidean ending that has Medea escaping from Corinth following the murder of her children, Moraga envisions a different outcome for her Mexican Medea, in a dual ending that sees our anti-heroine either imprisoned for the death of her son or in a reversal of actions, killed in an act of matricide. Owing to Medea's fragile state of mind, the veracity of this second ending is uncertain, as it may be a hallucination. In creating this ambiguous finale, Moraga directs us to the possibility of rewriting cultural narratives that have shaped the gendered social role of la Chicana Indígena. The cultural narrative explored in the play is one of sexist and homophobic Chicano nationalism that, as Domino Perez points out, is conveyed through a dystopian 'glimpse of a fully realized Aztlán.'[68]

As with Euripides's *Medea*, Moraga's *Hungry Woman* draws us into a tragic tale of love, power and revenge. Like her Greek counterpart, Moraga's Medea plays a role in cementing the success of her husband, Jasón. Just as Medea helped Jason to capture the Golden Fleece to secure the Iolcan throne of his father that had been usurped by Pelias, Moraga's protagonist plays a role in the revolution that salvages Aztlán from the grip of 'Euro-American cultural domination' (*HW*, 6). Following his rise to power, Jason/Jasón marginalises his wife in order to secure even more power for himself: through his bride-to-be, Glauce, Jason places himself in line to the throne of her father, King Creon[69]; Jasón, on the other hand, seeks to divorce Medea and marry a woman with a sufficient indigenous blood quantum to ensure that their offspring cements his own stature in Aztlán. Following the revelation that his new

[68] Domino Renee Perez, *There Was A Woman: La Llorona from Folklore to Popular Culture* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 2008), 99.
[69] Graves, 600, 616.

wife is unable to have children, Jasón resorts to claiming the custody of his existing son, Chac-Mool/Adolfo, who has enough 'Indian blood' from his mother to stake a claim in Aztlán for himself and, more importantly, for his father. In altering the pivotal act of infanticide in Euripides's play by positioning it alongside the alternative act of matricide, however, Moraga's text redirects the tragedy of the Greek drama toward a more nuanced consideration of Chicano nationalism's displacement of women. This is most cogently done through Moraga's inversion of the sexist nationalist narrative of female treachery.

We have seen through Chicano cultural nationalist texts such as *Joaquín* and 'El Plan', how mothers, daughters and sisters have been marginalised through notions of brotherhood, or *carnalismo*. The result, argues Alicia Arrizón, is that, 'The idea of sisterhood is dismissed by the sites of patriarchy and a heterosexist hierarchy.'[70] Through an inversion of a treacherous nationalist narrative, Moraga's Medea proposes that it is this dismissal of sisterhood that is the treacherous act, not Malinche's or Medea's:

> MEDEA: "Politics." Men think women have no love of country, that the desire for nation is a male prerogative. So like gods, they pick and choose who is to be born and live and die in a land I bled for equal to any man. Aztlán, how you betrayed me! Y acá me encuentro [And I find myself here] in this wasteland where yerbas grow bitter for lack of water, my face pressed to the glass of my own revolution like some húerfana abandonada [abandoned orphan]. (My translations, *HW*, 15)

Moraga's Medea is not an object reflecting the revolutionary actions undertaken by the men of her community. Instead, she is part of the revolution but has suffered a national betrayal at the hands of a patriarchal political movement that purports to establish cultural autonomy for all its citizens and yet suppresses the revolutionary work of its female populace. Or in the words of Gloria Anzaldúa, 'Not me sold out

[70] Alicia Arrizón, *Queering Mestizaje: Transculturation and Performance* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 76.

my people but they me.'[71] This helpful examination of Arrizón's heterosexist hierarchy is undermined, however, by Moraga's reconfiguration of Mesoamerican female figures in *The Hungry Woman* that returns to and embeds a narrative of complicit, treacherous mothers.

By aligning Medea with the role of Coyolxauhqui, the Mesoamerican female warrior, Moraga deconstructs an indigenous metanarrative of sibling conflict that is often 'interpreted to mean the triumph of patriarchy over matriarchy'[72] and that is symbolic of the Chicano Movement's betrayal of its own people: the story of Huitzilopotchli's birth. Upon hearing that her mother, Coatlicue the Earth Mother goddess, is pregnant with Huitzilopochtli, the Sun-War god, Coyolxauhqui, the moon goddess, attempts to kill Coatlicue. Coyolxauhqui's attempt fails, and Huitzilopochtli dismembers his sister, throwing her head into the sky where it becomes the moon.[73]

Symbolic of the historical dismemberment of indigenous women within patriarchal societies, Coyolxauhqui is one of the trinity of female figures whose narrative has contributed to Moraga's self-definition as a Xicana:

> …without my gods – Coatlicue, the mother of creation and destruction; Coyolxauhqui, her dismembered daughter; La Llorona, the inconsolable weeping woman – without these icons of collective MeXicana sedition, my criminal acts as a Xicana dyke writer would have no precedent, no history, and ultimately no consequence.
>
> Through the mutilated women of our Indigenous American history of story – La Llorona, Coyolxauhqui, Coatlicue – I came to understand genocide, misogyny, imperialism. And I claimed them sisters, allies in a war against forgetfulness. (*XC*, 95)

Here, Moraga makes clear her allegiance to a present-day 'sisterhood' that is informed by the historical and narrative mistreatment of indigenous women. This

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[71] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/*La Frontera*: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: aunt lute books, 2007)*,* 43, 44.
[72] Maria Herrera-Sobek, *Chicano Folklore: A Handbook* (Greenwood Press: Westport, Connecticut, 2006), 63.
[73] For accounts of this narrative see Maria Herrera-Sobek, *Chicano Folklore*, 61; and John Bierhorst, *The Hungry Woman,* 9.

sisterhood, however, is troubled by the recurring trope of female treachery where the mother, Coatlicue, is perceived as responsible for Huitzilopochtli's patriarchal triumph. In the final act of *The Hungry Woman*, where it becomes apparent that Medea is an embodiment of Coyolxauhqui, she turns upon the figure of her ancestor following the murder of her son:

> What crime do I commit now, Mamá?
> To choose the daughter over the son?
> You betrayed us, Madre Coatlicue.
> You, anciana, you who birthed the God of War.
>
> Huitzilopotchli.
> His Aztec name sours upon my lips,
> as the name of the son
> of the woman who gave me birth.
>
> My mother did not stop my brother's hand
> from reaching into my virgin bed.
> Nor did you hold back the sword
> that severed your daughter's head.
>
> Coyolxauhqui, diosa de la luna.
> *[Her arms stretch out to the full moon.]*
> Ahora, she is my god.
> La Luna, la hija rebelde. (*HW*, 91-92)

As Medea's brother, Huitzilopochtli is guilty of betraying his sister but is not alone in his culpability. In the only instance in the play where Medea's mother makes an appearance, played by one of the Nurses in a flashback, we learn that Medea has been sexually abused by her brother (*HW*, 57). This abuse has been sanctioned by Medea's mother, who insists, much like the mother in Moraga's semi-autobiographical writing,[74] that a daughter's role is to 'Wait on your brother. Give your brother whatever he wants' (*HW*, 58). This interpretation of Coyolxauhqui's story interprets the mother's failure to halt her son's violence as an act beyond mere passivity. Instead, as Mary Pat Brady suggests, Moraga's interpretation of the violence carried out against Coyolxauhqui, '…illustrates at once betrayal, the production and

[74] See 'My Brother's Sex Was White, Mine, Brown' in Moraga, *Loving in the War Years*.

reproduction of patriarchy, and the romanticism that enshrines a disempowered but complicit motherhood.'[75] What is problematic about Moraga's otherwise progressive deconstruction of the Chicano nationalist suppression of indigenous women, however, is her displacement of one of the greatest proponents of Chicano sedition: Malinche. The Chicano symbolic defining moment of mestizaje involving Cortés and Malinche is eschewed in favour of a 'self-racialization' that paradoxically silences Malinche, "the" indigenous Chicana.

A racial erosion of culture: absenting the indigenous woman

Moraga's reconfigurations of mythology present us with a complex paradox: Moraga wishes to overturn the subjugation of indigenous women that has occurred through the colonising methodology of patriarchy, yet she attempts to make female indigeneity visible through a project of racialization that silences the heterogeneous complexity of indigenous cultures. This paradox is, I will argue, a result of entrenched non-contradiction that is evident through Moraga's underlying project to inscribe racial binaristic subjectivity, and Moraga's inability to place value upon Malinche's 'evil' that does not conform to restrictive notions of edenic originary narratives.

Moraga's racialization of indigenous cultures takes place through a racialization of body and land. Given that Moraga rejects the notion of '"Indian" in the colonial sense of the word' (*LG*, 157), Moraga's postcolonial definition of indigeneity remains unclear, beyond potentially essentialist allusions to blood and race. In 'Remembering Navajo Nation', Moraga visits her cousin Rudy, the 'family anthropologist' who has been researching the history of the Moragas. As the cousins discuss their family history,

[75] Mary Pat Brady, *Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies: Chicana Literature and the Urgency of Space* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2002), 161.

> The Spanish surnames spill from [Rudy's] tongue…Figueroa, Mendibles, Rodríguez…I swallow, hesitate. I ask, "And the Indians?...Did you find out anything about our Indian blood?" "Oh there must have been some," he says. But no mention, no unnamed bisabuelo. Still, the dark faces appear and disappear in photographs with no native claim, no name. (*LG*, 130)

Whether or not Moraga can prove indigenous heritage is not my concern. Rather, my interest lies in how Moraga frames her indigeneity. The framework utilised by Moraga is one that implies a form of concrete, genetic, 'blood' proof of identity that concurrently implies the biological veracity, as opposed to social construction, of race, equating notions of indigenous 'authenticity' with biological markers. This inclination toward biological essentialism is explored in Sandra Soto's work on Moraga's 'self-racialization'.

Soto highlights the way in which Moraga utilises race in an attempt to alter her status from 'outsider' (lesbian, feminist, middle class, light-skinned, mixed-race with an Anglo American father) to accepted member of the Chicano community, *la raza*,[76] through an inscription of racial difference: '…the subject [of Moraga's autobiographical works] writes herself into a narrative of racialized difference, emerging as they do from a profound desire to be recognized and engaged as a racialized subject.'[77] This is most contentiously played out through Moraga's action to seek out a 'raza' sperm donor. In *Waiting in the Wings: portrait of a queer motherhood*, a memoir charting the conception, pregnancy and premature birth of her son, Moraga confesses that, 'I am the worst and best of those macho Chicano nationalists. I picked a man for his brains and dark beauty. And the race continues' (*WW*, 39). As Soto points out, Moraga 'conflate[s] surface with depth in her

[76] Sandra K. Soto, 'Cherríe Moraga's Going Brown: "Reading Like a Queer",' *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (Vol. 11, No. 2, 2005).
[77] Ibid., 238.

representations of embodied race,'[78] to the extent that she attempts to ensure the survival of raza community through racialized progeny in a damaging conflation of race and ethnicity. Moraga's reconfiguration of foundational Chicano narratives is undermined by this structure of non-contradiction that transposes a binaristic racial structure onto Chicana/o identity whereby one is either raced/raza or Other. Whilst there is some scope for assessing Moraga's 'self-racialization' as an attempt at racial pride in the face of racist oppression, given Moraga's recognition of '[nationalism's] tendency toward separatism [that] can run dangerously close to biological determinism' (*LG*, 149), it remains difficult to distinguish Moraga's desire for dark skin from such essentialised nationalist mechanisms. These mechanisms also extend to a concomitant racialization of indigenous land.

The Hungry Woman uses land to critique the descent of Chicano nationalism into a modern-day land grab reminiscent of colonial times, just as the installation of hierarchies following the civil war at the beginning of the play repeats the very patterns of patriarchal oppression overturned by the first revolution.[79] No longer concerned with the revolution's initial 'ultimate goal of defending aboriginal rights throughout the globe' (*HW*, 6), geographic settlement now serves an economic purpose. In a humorously ironic exchange between Savannah and Mama Sal where they describe the history of the revolution and counter-revolution to Chac-Mool during a game of bingo, we come to understand that the anti-capitalist, anti-corporate and ecological agenda deriving from indigenous peoples across America (including

[78] Ibid., 248.

[79] Mexican Americans during the civil rights era did attempt to reclaim land from the United States Government. Most notably, Reies López Tijerina and the Alianza land grant movement attempted to reclaim rights to land in New Mexico through the stipulations of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. They did not succeed. See J. Jorge Klor de Alva, 'Aztlán, Borinquen and Hispanic Nationalism in the United States' in Anaya and Lomeli, *Aztlán*. See also Manuel Gonzales, *Mexicanos,* 202-204.

mestizos) that led to the first revolution, has descended into a free market economy limited only by the proviso of indigenous heritage:

> CHAC-MOOL: Luna told me that they just finished building a strip of casinos along Cuahtemoc Boulevard.
>
> MAMA SAL: Casinos? In Aztlán?
>
> CHAC-MOOL: With neon, glitter and the works.
>
> SAVANNAH: I guess they figure the Indians are making a killing on gambling throughout the Union, why not the Chicanos, too? No one's gonna leave them in the dust of socialism.
>
> MAMA SAL: Wannabes. First it's the sweat lodge, then the sundance. Ni saben su propia tradición indígena.
>
> NURSE: G-47.
>
> MAMA SAL: Still, maybe it's not such a bad thing. Our people is already crazy for the (*Slapping down the last bean*) Bingo! (*HW*, 25)

The ironic naming of the boulevard after Aztec leader Cuauhtemoc, who attempted but failed to stave off the onslaught of Hernán Cortés,[80] emphasises how Aztlán's indigenous-influenced, anti-colonial, socialist agenda has been paved over with the solidification of political power through the acquisition of material assets, mirroring the capitalist framework – the 'poisoned alphabet soup' of transnational economic treaties such as NAFTA that showed greater concern for corporate profit above local ecology and infrastructure (*HW*, 23) – initially targeted by the revolutionaries. Furthermore, this ownership of land that affords political power is facilitated through the objectification of Native Americans, commodifying aspects of indigenous identity in order to then 'buy into' the land made accessible through these peoples. This is the motivation of Chicano 'wannabes' such as Jasón, whose son affords him access to the material power of indigenous land: 'I have what I want now. Land and a future in the

[80] John H. Elliott, 'The Overthrow of Moctezuma and his Empire' in Colin McEwan and Leonardo López Luján (Eds.), *Moctezuma: Aztec Ruler* (London: The British Museum Press, 2009), 224.

body of that boy' (*HW*, 69). Like Moraga's intention to liberate the female body from restrictive patriarchal mechanisms, the damning portrayal of Chicano nationalism gone awry, romanticising and appropriating indigenous identity and land for material gain, is intended to highlight the danger of Chicano nationalism falling into a colonial pattern of land appropriation. If we expand Sandra Soto's notion of Moraga's racialization of the body, to encompass a racialization of indigenous land, however, both land and body fall prey to objectification through the binaristic mechanisms underpinning her nationalism.

By labelling the land of the Americas as 'brown' as she does the 'brown and female body' Moraga effects the same process of racialization discussed above, aligning Chicanas with indigeneity through restrictive racial markers, whilst concomitantly homogenising indigenous identity. This racialization of land is problematic as it falls into a conception of land that is not too far removed from that of Manifest Destiny, which objectifies land in order to justify its removal from established communities. Deriving from the notion of American Exceptionalism, the ideology of Manifest Destiny engendered 'the belief that the United States was destined to bring a perfected form of democratic capitalism to the entire North American continent,' which ironically involved 'a policy of forcible removal of those tribes that would not retreat before the advance of democratic civilisation.'[81] The form of democratic capitalism that entailed the westward movement engendered through Manifest Destiny, was aided in no small part through an objectification of Native Americans and their land. As D'Arcy McNickle argues, 'Until the third decade of the [twentieth] century Indian policy was rooted in the assumption that the Indians would

[81] Deborah L. Madsen, *American Exceptionalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 48.

disappear.'[82] This was an assumption based on the damaging idea that Native Americans are no more than historical artefacts, borne out through 'popular stereotypes that present us as unintelligent and refer to us in the past tense rather than as people who inhabit the present.'[83] Gerald Vizenor attributes this obscuring of contemporary Native Americans to translators of tribal narratives who, through 'the notion of "vanishing tribes" [that] is a lonesome nuisance,' reveal 'racialism and the contradictions in humanism and historical determinism.' [84] In her remythologisation of indigenous female figures, Moraga similarly dislodges Malinche from having influence upon contemporary agency, by failing to include her in the futuristic Medean origin story of Chicano nationalism.

The absence of Malinche from Moraga's trinity of La Llorona, Coatlicue and Coyolxauhqui, figures she specifically notes for a sedition that validates her own status as an anti-patriarchal lesbian Chicana, suggests that Moraga does not regard Malinche's 'criminal' in the same vein as the transgressive actions of these other women. I argue that this is owing to Moraga's limited conceptualisation of origin stories, coupled with the reductive process of racialization described above, that leaves her unable to incorporate contradiction. Through the omission of Malinche and her act of sexual union with Cortés, Moraga's origin story adheres to a notion of female innocence and a misleading quest for originary unity. The generative potential of dismantling the restrictive dualism of 'good versus evil' is demonstrated by Haraway's cyborg:

> Our bodies, ourselves – bodies are maps of power and identity. Cyborgs are no exceptions. A cyborg body is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity and so generates antagonistic dualisms without end (or until the

[82] D'Arcy McNickle quoted in Beverly R. Singer, *Wiping the War Paint off the Lens: Native American Film and Video* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2001), 1.
[83] Singer, 2.
[84] Gerald Vizenor (Ed.), *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 9-10.

> world ends); it takes irony for granted. One is too few, and two is only one possibility…. The machine is not to be animated, worshiped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; they do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries; we are they.[85]

An affirmation of Malinche's acts, regardless of their unknown motives, would distance Chicano narratives from the misleading uniformity of identity insinuated through the innocence of dualistic origin stories that negates transgressive acts of survival.[86] And just as Haraway's cyborg encourages us to imagine a utopian 'world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis,'[87] Moraga's remythologisations of Chicano identity would benefit from imagining a world without race, where ethnicity is not restricted through the non-contradiction of racialized subject versus Other. Finding no room within Moraga's racialized political agenda, Malinche, *the* indigenous matriarch of the Chicano narrative, remains exiled from Moraga's mestizo landscape.

Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated that Moraga's foregrounding of indigenous women is troubled by an Aristotelian framework of non-contradiction that essentialises indigeneity through a racialized configuration of cultural identity. In her essay, 'Queer Aztlán', Moraga helpfully highlights the ways in which patriarchal Chicano nationalism might be addressed through a re-evaluation of indigenous female figures. Utilising an anticolonial rhetoric, 'Queer Aztlán' demands a decolonisation of both female body and female land to overturn the mechanisms of nationalism that have subjugated heterogeneous embodiments of Chicanismo such as Moraga's Chicana

[85] Donna Haraway, 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs', 222.
[86] Ibid., 219.
[87] Ibid., 192.

lesbian. The displacement of female indigenous political subjectivity by Chicano nationalism has been enacted in part, this chapter has argued, through a variation of the Mexican nationalist process of indigenismo.

The post-Mexican revolutionary process of indigenismo has promoted a problematic foregrounding of mestizaje, resulting in the homogenisation of indigenous cultures through the figure of the modern mestizo. Indigenismo has also perpetuated the narrative of a virgin-whore dichotomy, through the beatification of the mestizo la Virgen de Guadalupe and the abjection of the pre-Cortésian Malinche. Synonymous with a narrative of treachery and sin, the female indigenous figure of Malinche has been used to negate the presence of non-mestizo indigenous peoples. To redress such damaging patriarchal imagery, Moraga has remythologised indigenous, mestizo and classical European female figures in a reinterpretation of the Chicano origin story of Aztlán.

In *The Hungry Woman*, Moraga's Mexican Medea confronts the transformation of Chicano nationalism into a capitalist, patriarchal movement that suppresses the political agency of its non-normative (female and homosexual) citizens. Moraga rewrites the origins of Aztlán as a dystopian narrative of a nationalist movement blinded by a power-hungry land-grab. As well as the infamous Medea, Moraga transposes the figures of La Llorona and the pre-Cortésian Coatlicue and Coyolxauhqui onto her protagonist, demonstrating the specific ways in which indigenous women have been objectified and discarded as proofs of indigeneous ancestry and obstacles to patriarchal, mestizo power. While Moraga's reconfiguration demonstrates the dangers of Chicano nationalism's sexism and homophobia through a re-imagining of Medea as a dark female threat to patriarchy, Moraga's incorporation of indigenous female figures conspicuously absents Malinche.

This chapter has argued that Moraga's reinterpretation of Chicano origins is unable to accommodate Malinche's treacherous acts, due to a restrictive interpretation of origin stories that elides the complexity of human behaviour through an inadequate binary of good and evil. In an attempt to establish an innocent narrative of authentic origination free of sin, Moraga's creation story rejects the very woman symbolically responsible for the birth of mestizos through her interracial union with Cortés. This rejection of Malinche is compounded by an entrenchment of a restrictive framework of non-contradiction, through a project of self-racialization.

In labelling the indigenous female body as 'brown', Moraga visualises the Chicana made invisible through the delimiting black-white paradigm discussed in the previous chapter. Allusions to blood and race, however, have the effect of subsuming indigenous ethnicities into a framework of race, reflecting what Soto describes as a 'refusal to critique models of authenticity.'[88] Malinche's evil act of 'dilution' does not conform to the 'race' that Moraga attempts to establish through her essentialist political agenda. Malinche's narrative is marginalised by Moraga's racialized model of authenticity that enacts an impossible search for lost origins,[89] displacing the contemporary agency of indigenous women. This is a model of authenticity that utilises a framework of non-contradiction that insists upon oppositional binaries, denying the existence of multifarious formations of identity and the very desired subject at the heart of Moraga's identity politics. Instead of interrogating the dynamic of 'us versus them' that has been used to negate marginal identities, Moraga's racialized indigeneity replaces it, with a binary that pits racialized Chicana/os against a non-racialized Other.

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[88] Soto, 238.

[89] Lisbeth Gant-Britton, 'Mexican Women and Chicanas Enter Futuristic Fiction' in Marleen S. Barr (Ed.), *Future Females, The Next Generation: New Voices and Velocities in Feminist Science Fiction Criticism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 277.

Epilogue

This project has explored the political benefits of contradiction through an exploration of the work of Cherríe Moraga. The focus upon Moraga is intended to provide understanding for present day social justice projects, by uncovering the obstacles to political alliance that arise from a failure to acknowledge contradiction. The endemic gender inequality that continues to affect women of colour in the United States, has led me to consider ways in which people from different backgrounds might be able to enhance projects of social justice through improved dialogic networks that eschew the divisive Aristotelian model of non-contradiction. By turning to the work of Moraga, a Chicana who partook of 1980s U.S. women of colour feminism but whose work has increasingly focused upon Chicana identity, this project has identified an entrenched model of non-contradiction that is an obstacle to political alliance within a disparate demographic.

The secondary aim of this project has been to highlight the ways in which non-contradiction has obscured the progressive political elements of Moraga's work. I have developed 'contradictory' readings of Moraga's oeuvre that uncover textual sites where supposedly oppositional elements are simultaneously, and necessarily, accommodated to progressive political effect, extending the notion of Moraga as a literary activist.

Moraga does, in many ways, embrace contradiction. Moraga's attempt to inscribe Chicana subjectivity is at once an effort to 'Re-form' the 'Chicano Tribe' (*LG*, 145) and continue the work of Chicano nationalism through 'a broader and wiser revolution' (*LG*, 150). This broader reconfiguration of Chicano nationalism involves

deconstructing the patriarchal, heteronormative mechanisms that have suppressed heterogeneous female political agency. Refuting the strictures of Chicano nationalism, it is possible, Moraga argues, to be simultaneously lesbian and mother; oppressor and oppressed; and any other number of oppositions. This enactment of a contradictory existence is politically articulated through a feminist-inflected identity politics that also argues for the simultaneous existence of oppositions: the personal is political. Dismantling the gendered divide between the realms of private and public, this feminist mantra recognises the damaging effects of patriarchal decision-making upon the minutiae of women's lives. Feminists such as Moraga have illustrated the connection between personal and political worlds by utilising autobiographical methodologies that politically theorise lived experiences. Forming the content of Moraga's politicised lived experience is her Chicana subjectivity.

Moraga's project of inscribing her Chicana subjectivity draws from Chicano cultural nationalism. Like other Chicano nationalists, Moraga seeks to inscribe and thus validate, Chicana/o identity in the face of what is regarded as the 'neo-colonial' machinations of the United States that marginalise people of colour through racism and cultural assimilation. This inscription of identity involves historical and mythical excavations that argue for the recognition of pre-colonial indigenous ancestors – thus validating the existence of Chicanos – and an enactment and promotion of present-day ethno-cultural indicators such as language. My project has posited, however, that the nationalist-influenced identity politics of Moraga demonstrate an underlying refusal of contradiction, whereby the espoused heterogeneity of Chicana subjectivity is curtailed by the workings of essentialism that exclude Mexican Americans who do not conform to an identity defined through the logic of nationalism. Furthermore, this essentialism is a continuation of the oppressive, binaristic mechanisms of colonialism

that Chicano nationalism purports to put an end to. Through her articulations of language, race and indigenous identity, Moraga demonstrates an internalisation and enactment of the very oppositional structures that have positioned her as Other.

The use of Spanish by Moraga as a tool of resistance illustrates her conception of a Chicano 'nation within a nation,' subject to a model of 'internal colonisation' that suppresses Chicano culture through the assimilationist policies of institutional neo-colonialism. The abolition of bilingual education in California, Moraga's home state, is a primary example of such policies, raising the issue of how we define a people, a nation, through signifiers of cultural sovereignty such as language, and how the forced erosion of such significations is resisted.

Drawing from Moraga's responses to California's Proposition 227 to abolish bilingual education, I have argued that Moraga's performance of language-as-resistance involves, in line with her autobiographical writing, substantiation through inscription. Spanish is acquired and enacted by Moraga to demonstrate the existence and validity of Chicano cultural practice but the chapter on bilingual education has demonstrated that the transgressive qualities of this acquisition are minimized through essentialist notions of a 'mother tongue'. Rather than acknowledging the social constructivist development of language, Moraga articulates Spanish as a 'proof' of cultural identity, through the genetic allusions to the Spanish of her mother's Mexican heritage. This undermines the subversive articulations of language made elsewhere, that sees Moraga making innovative use of Spanish to articulate the specificities of her Chicana lesbianism.

Further compounding Moraga's damaging non-contradictory approach to language is the framing of Spanish language suppression as a modern-day tactic of

colonialism in light of the Spanish colonial history of suppressing indigenous peoples and languages, peoples with whom Moraga claims an alliance. Responding to English-only campaigns as predominantly detrimental to Spanish, through a focus on the underlying anti-Latino sentiment displayed by those opposed to bilingual education, Moraga displaces the cultural subjectivity of non-Spanish languages under threat. The articulation of a binary power struggle between "Us and Them" – Spanish and English – remains, leaving no intervening space for the inclusion of other languages and the cultural value they represent. This singular focus upon Spanish leaves Chiano nationalism open to claims of being merely strategic rather than anti-colonial. The lack of engagement with present-day indigenous languages, although arguably understandable in light of the specificity of Moraga's Mexican heritage, is only partially assuaged by dramatic enactments that introduce speech deriving from Quiché Maya languages. Such troubled alliances, where similar cultural groups are in fact marginalised further through the binary framework of non-contradiction, are exemplified through Moraga's contribution to cross-racial feminism.

As co-editor of *This Bridge Called My Back* and co-founder of Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, Moraga has expressed the political goal to work across cultural difference with other women of colour. Through the differential consciousness promoted through forms of U.S. third world feminism, variously situated women of colour can attempt to work through mutually experienced oppressions. This is not only textually evoked through the content of *Bridge*, which invokes the voices of women of colour, but also through the publishing alliance of Kitchen Table involving (but not exclusive to) the cross-racial dynamics of black and Latina women. Chapter Three on Moraga's role within the cross-racial feminist alliance of Kitchen Table has demonstrated the writer's recognition of beneficial

contradiction through textual variations of U.S. third world feminism. Methods such as consciousness-raising and the autotheoretical are utilised in *Bridge* and amongst Kitchen Table members, to interrogate the false division between political and personal realms, in the hope that the forms of oppression affecting women of colour can be revealed and addressed. I have argued, however, that Moraga's move away from cross-racial feminist alliance is indicative of a selective approach to contradiction that is underpinned by a Chicano nationalist inscription of identity, which inevitably entails the exclusion of other identities.

This chapter has argued that Moraga's move away from cross-racial feminist alliance, which the writer attributes to a disproportionate methodological reliance by black feminists upon the black-white paradigm of race, demonstrates a denial of contradiction where it is not beneficial to an inscription of Chicana/o subjectivity. Moraga contends that too great a focus upon the black-white paradigm fails to account for the history of non-black women in the United States, diminishing the cultural subjectivity and political agendas of non-black women of colour feminists. This chapter has argued that in forsaking the extensive political potential of Chela Sandoval's differential consciousness, and Donna Haraway's cyborg who challenges false dualisms in favour of political affinities, Moraga has problematically conflated identity and political cause. Whilst it is evident that an inscription of Chicana subjectivity *is* Moraga's political cause, I do not believe that this should be a standalone project; *Bridge*, after all, was an undertaking designed to recognise and forge connections between women. This, I believe, is part of the work of identity politics, ensuring that we acknowledge how our subjectivity is connected to, and informed by, those of others. Instead, by moving away from multiracial feminism,

Moraga displays a troublesome inability to enact the politically progressive contradiction of being both Chicana and cross-racial feminist.

Chapter Four extends the discussion of the black-white paradigm through an exploration of the consciousness-raising properties of fiction. While the previous chapter highlighted Moraga's argument that a black-white paradigmatic framework failed to encompass the identity politics of non-black women of colour, in this chapter I have argued that Moraga's short story 'Pesadilla' demonstrates how the non-contradiction of the black-white paradigm does in fact impact upon non-black women of colour, through the process of internalisation. A story of the disintegration of a black-Latina lesbian couple, 'Pesadilla', I argue, reveals the unconscious, psychological damage of racial structures upon individuals and interpersonal relations. The internalisation of the black-white paradigm by Cecilia, a Latina, results in a rejection of her black lover and her own Latina cultural heritage. Following the violent naming of race and sexuality, I have argued that Cecilia becomes increasingly uneasy about her interracial relationship with a black woman, and her own Latino culture, through their negation against the value of 'whiteness'. Cecilia rejects everything that is Other; everything that is not validated through the black-white racial paradigm. These revelations are made possible through the properties of the short story form.

Through an alignment of the short story and the process of consciousness-raising I have maintained that like the innovative methodologies utilised by U.S. third world feminists such as the autotheoretical, 'Pesadilla' textually deconstructs the limitations of non-contradiction. The events of the fictional 'Pesadilla' draw our attention to lived experiences documented in the work of fellow Kitchen Table member Barbara Smith, engendering a dialogic process between oeuvres that is

mediated by the reader. The revelatory ending of the short story that concentrates the reader's attention upon the oppressive mechanisms of internalisation, forms part of a larger project encouraging us to interrogate the division of fact ('truth') and fiction ('falsity'), in order to ensure that the psychological matter of lived experience is adequately unpicked by any theory that purports to address internalised oppression. Whilst the revelations of 'Pesadilla' are beneficial, naming the issue of an internalised black-white paradigm in the tradition of consciousness-raising, the project of self-racialization explored in the following chapter makes us question how far these revelations have been acted upon.

In foregrounding indigenous female subjectivity through the figure of 'La Chicana Indígena', Chapter Five has argued that Moraga displays the entrenched workings of an Aristotelian framework of non-contradiction, through a conflation of ethnicity and race. Moraga's essay 'Queer Aztlán' and her remythologisation of Chicano origin stories involving indigenous female figures, deconstruct the patriarchal mechanisms that have suppressed the political agency of Chicanas. The absence of Malinche from Moraga's reconfigured origin stories, however, rejects the very symbolic mother of mestizos in the Americas. This rejection, I have argued, results from the limitations of the binary framework that underpins Moraga's notion of creation stories. Positioning Malinche's acts as anathema to the innocence associated with origin stories, Moraga sees the sexual liaison between Malinche and Cortés as a solely sinful act, rather than an enactment of survival. In light of Moraga's inscription of race, I maintain that the writer's notion of Malinche's 'sin' is bound to a racialized conception of indigeneity, where racial mixture is synonymous with cultural assimilation.

The self-racialization evident in Moraga's nationalism highlights the elements of *indigenismo* used to forge Chicano subjectivity, whereby indigeneity is obscured through the rhetoric of *mestizaje*. Although the process of mestizaje connotes racial mixture, like her origin stories, Moraga's configuration of racialized Chicanos displays a problematic political ideology of establishing purity. Through a labelling of Chicano women and Chicano land as 'brown', and her autobiographical confession of choosing a Latino sperm donor to ensure a perpetuation of 'la raza', Moraga invokes the essentialist marker of race. Moraga simplistically visualises Chicana/os as brown, inscribing the very structure of race that has been used to oppress people of colour, whilst also subsuming heterogeneous indigenous ethnicities into this same framework. This returns us, finally, to Moraga's overarching project of validating Chicana subjectivity, which is in effect a project of inscription. Through binaristic approaches to issues affecting marginalised subjectivity such as language, race, and indigeneity, Moraga's identity politics demonstrate a difficulty in interrogating the mechanism of Aristotelian non-contradiction that underpins the very creation of negated difference. This Aristotelian framework remains unquestioned by Moraga, whose 'refusal to critique models of authenticity'[1] is a static perpetuation of essentialism.

[1] Sandra K. Soto, 'Cherríe Moraga's Going Brown: "Reading Like a Queer",' *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (Vol. 11, No. 2, 2005), 238.

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